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CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY:

A Vindication

OF THE

DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

GROUNDED ON THE

HISTORICAL VERITY OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

By WILLIAM LINDSAY ALEXANDER, D.D.

Mere guess, supposition, and possibility, when opposed to historical evidence, prove nothing but that historical evidence is not demonstrative.—BUTLER, Analogy, Part II, c. 7.

The character of the true philosopher is to hope all things not impossible, and to believe all things not unreasonable.—HERSCHELL, Discourse, p. 8.

NEW YORK:
CARLTON & LANAHAN.
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1854

PREFACE.

I DO not offer this book to the public as one which pretends to set forth anything substantially new in support of the divine origin and authority of Christianity. At the same time, I am not aware that the materials of which my argument is constructed have been previously put before the public in exactly the same form.

My aim has been, by a process of strictly inductive reasoning, to place the claims of Christianity upon a solid philosophical basis. I have argued exclusively from *facts;* and both in the preparation of these facts, and in reasoning from them, I have sought to keep close by those established laws of scientific investigation which all men engaged in inquiries where hypothesis is requisite are taught to reverence as the only safe guides to knowledge.

I have endeavoured also to make my researches bear upon the more recent forms of infidelity in this country and on the continent.* I have felt it necessary to enter particularly upon the theory of Strauss respecting the origin of the Gospels, partly because his work is, I understand, much read in certain circles, and partly because, in the strictures which have been

* The last edition of Mr. Newman's "Phases of Faith" having reached me as this work was passing through the press, I had intended noticing in the Appendix his extraordinary and revolting chapter on the Moral Character of Christ. In the mean time, however, I learned that the author of the "Eclipse of Faith" had taken Mr. Newman's work in hand, and I therefore gladly relinquished to his able pen the task of dealing with that sad chapter as it deserved. I am happy I did so: my friend has done the work in a style which renders it superfluous for any other writer to touch it.

offered upon it by some recent writers in this country, the hypothesis actually advanced by Strauss does not appear to me to have been accurately apprehended.

There are some, in the present day, who profess to be, and I have no doubt are, sincere believers in Christianity, who affect to speak depreciatingly of the historical evidence of that religion. From anything I have seen of what they propose to substitute in the place of this, I cannot say that I have been impressed with any profound sense of respect either for their judgment or their powers of reasoning. Still it does surprise me that in men of piety the mere religious instinct has not been sufficiently powerful to make them shrink from treating with disrespect the evidence to which Christ and his apostles, not chiefly, but exclusively, appeal in support of the claims of the religion they taught.

I have only to add, that, in the first part of the argument, I have made free use of two articles which I contributed to the British Quarterly Review some years ago: the one on Strauss's "Life of Jesus critically considered;"* the other on Norton's valuable work on "The Genuineness of the Gospels." The former of these was, I believe, the earliest, and it still remains the fullest, examination of the Straussian hypothesis which has appeared in this country.

PINKIE BURN, 13*th January*, 1854.

* I perceive that, of those who have animadverted on Strauss in this country, two have blamed him severely for calling his work "A Life of Jesus." This is unfair. Strauss does not pretend to write a life of Jesus. The title of his book is *Das Leben Jesu kritisch bearbeitet*—literally, *The Life of Jesus critically worked at;* which accurately enough describes his design. His aim is not to write *a* Life of Jesus, but to subject to a destructive criticism *the* Life of Jesus furnished by the evangelists.

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT.

It must be admitted by all thoughtful persons, that no question can be proposed, more worthy of being carefully considered and deliberately settled, than that which respects the truth of the religion of Jesus Christ. On no other question do interests so numerous and so awful hang, as are suspended on this. If Christianity be true, it is the *one* religion for man; for its claims being absolute and exclusive, if it is admitted to be true, it must be accepted as alone true—as the sole and perfect system of religious belief—the single trustworthy guide to immortality which is within the reach of man. On this supposition, to reject it or treat it with neglect is to remove the last hope of beatitude or of safety in that eternity which lies before us. Again, if Christianity is not true, it is desirable that this should be settled upon solid and satisfactory grounds; for while, on the one hand, it would be a pity that so many should be resting upon a delusion, it is, on the other hand, unworthy of an intelligent man to reject such a system as this without being convinced,

on the most satisfactory grounds, that it deserves to be rejected. Of all, then, whether inclined to be the enemies, or professing to be the adherents of Christianity, this question demands the conscientious scrutiny;—of the latter, that their faith may not rest on mere tradition; of the former, that they may not be hastily seduced into a course which may turn out one of sin and folly, as well as of irreparable disaster.

To those, indeed, who have previously embraced the religion of Jesus Christ, there is a species of evidence arising from within their own souls, which may seem to render them independent of any consideration of the objective evidences of our faith. Such have a witness in their own hearts. Truth, like light, carries its own evidence with it; and especially in the case of *moral* truth, there is a certain response yielded by the inner man to the enunciation of what is true, which, to the mind that is the subject of it, is often the strongest of all confirmations. In a scheme like Christianity, moreover, which professes to furnish a method of satisfying the religious wants, and furthering the religious interests of mankind, there is an opportunity afforded to those who embrace it of putting its pretensions, in this respect, to the test; and when it is found experimentally to answer to its pretensions,—when it is found actually to perform what it offers to perform, the man in whom the experiment had been conducted cannot

but feel that he has in himself an evidence of the truth of the system, to which he may with the utmost confidence appeal. But while admitting all this, I would nevertheless contend that no Christian can wisely, or even safely, neglect the study of those evidences of our religion, which go to prove it true antecedent to the personal reception of it by the individual. Let it be remembered that whatever evidence personal experience can convey to a man's own mind, it is only to himself that such evidence is addressed, and it cannot be made available for the service of the gospel beyond the narrow sphere of his individual convictions. Let it be remembered, also, that Christianity comes to us in an *objective* form—in the form of a book; that, therefore, it is not only bound to bring with it such evidence as shall entitle it to speak to us authoritatively, but that the sure and orderly process for us is to insist upon its satisfying us on this point *before* we listen to it; and that when this is not done, there will always remain a weak point in our foundation, of which the adversary may find means to avail himself for our own discomfort, and the injury of our cause. And, in fine, let it be remembered, that as it is not only to certain cardinal verities that the Christian must yield his cordial assent, but to *all things which are written in the book* in which the development of Christianity is contained; it is only as he is satisfied, on solid grounds, that the book, as

a book, is entitled to his homage, that he will be prepared to bow to it with that docility which is required. For his own sake, then, for the sake of the cause of Christianity, as well as for the sake of those who may be yet opposing themselves to the truth, it behooves the Christian to make himself familiar with the evidences of his religion, that he may not only be himself well established in the faith, but be "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh the reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear."

The subject of the evidences of Christianity is a very copious one, embracing several departments, and receiving contributions from numerous different sources. It is not my intention in this treatise to go beyond the exposition of one single line of argument; which I have selected, partly because of its intrinsic weight and interest, partly because it has not been so frequently dwelt upon, or so fully treated by those who have written on the evidences, as have other branches of the subject.

Of the argument I mean to pursue, a brief conspectus may thus be given:—

1. In the four Gospels certain things are set forth which, *if true*, render it indubitable that Christianity has come from above.

2. But these things must be true from the necessity of the case, because of the impossibility of their being fabrications, *if* the Gospels were really written

by the men whose names they bear, and were received in the early Churches as authentic narratives of our Lord's life and actions.

3. But these Gospels *were* written by those to whom they are ascribed; and *were* universally accepted in the early Churches as such.

4. It follows that the statements they contain are true, and, consequently, that the religion they introduce is divine.

Such is the argument in substance which it shall be my endeavour to sustain. It rests the defence of Christianity upon two leading positions,—the genuineness of the Gospels,—and the truths of the statements they contain, and the representations they make, as consequent upon their genuineness. These two things proved, this argument infers the truth of the Christian religion as a consequence following irresistibly from them. The course obviously to be taken, then, in presenting the argument for the consideration of the reader, is, in the first instance, to prove the genuineness of the four Gospels, and having established that, to take up those parts of their contents, of which it is affirmed that, if true, they prove the truth of Christianity, and show first that they are true, and then, that being true, they carry with them evidence that Christianity is divine.

The advantage of such an argument as this is, that it takes nothing for granted, except those natural principles of belief which are assumed in all

reasoning, and those fundamental truths of natural religion which are admitted by all men who are not avowed atheists. With persons of this latter class I have, in the present instance, no argument. We set out with the assumption that man is a religious being; and that there is a God, in the knowledge, worship, and service of whom, man finds the proper object of his religious tendencies. It is assumed also, that as God has made man, he is able to communicate his will to man, in a form capable of being committed to writing, and so of being preserved from age to age; and further, that as man very much needs to be instructed on religious subjects, it is a thing not only greatly to be *desired* that God would send to him such a revelation of his will, but a thing in the highest degree *probable*, that a just and benevolent being, as God is, will send to his creatures such a message. Beyond these elementary and purely preliminary assertions, I ask nothing to be conceded before addressing myself to my argument. To all who are prepared to admit them, Christianity offers herself as *the* revelation which God has actually sent to man; and it is at this point that the defenders of her claims can alone be summoned to enter the field. From this point, however, they must make good their cause by vindicating every position they advance by sound and fair reasoning.

PART I.

PROOF THAT THE FOUR GOSPELS ARE GENUINE.

Non per alios dispositionem salutis nostræ cognovimus, quam per eos per quos Evangelium pervenit ad nos; quod quidem tunc praeconiaverunt; postea vero per Dei voluntatem in Scripturis nobis tradiderunt, fundamentum et columnam fidei nostræ futuram.

IRENÆUS, *Adv. Hær.*, *l.* 3, *c.* 1.

CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

PART I.

The first question which it behooves us to discuss in the process of argumentation I have delineated, respects the *genuineness of the four Gospels.*

Now the case submitted here is this:—Among the literary remains of antiquity we possess four short treatises, professing to give an account of the personal history of the Author of Christianity, and purporting to be written by individuals who were either his personal attendants while he was upon earth, or had received their information from those who were such. And the question we have to consider is: Have we sufficient reason for believing that these treatises were actually written by these individuals, or must we regard them as the production of a later age forged in their names?

The former of these positions it is the design of the following pages to maintain, by showing that we have abundant reason for receiving these treatises as genuine.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY REASONINGS.

In proceeding to defend the genuineness of the Gospels, I venture to observe, that a candid inquirer, in looking into these treatises, can hardly fail to be struck with the fact that, if they *are* forgeries, they have been executed with *singular dexterity*. It requires but little reflection to perceive that to compose a writing in the name of another person, so as to have any chance of really passing for his, is, under any circumstances, a task of considerable difficulty. Before this can be done, the forger must place himself in the exact position of the party he seeks to personate, so as to look at everything from *his* point of view; he must make himself familiar with all the events, localities, usages, and persons, with which or with whom the party whose name he uses is known to have been familiar, while, on the other hand, he must studiously suppress all knowledge of his own, such as that party *could* not have possessed; he must imbue himself with all the peculiar prejudices and habits of thought of his model, so as *naturally* to express himself on all occasions as the other would have done; and he must take care that his language and style are exactly such as

an individual placed in the circumstances pretended would have employed. To do all this is, under any circumstances, I say, a difficult task; but the difficulty becomes greatly enhanced when the party who is supposed to write has been long dead, was a foreigner, and used a very peculiar dialect, now almost obsolete, lived amid circumstances which have entirely passed away, occupied a position so peculiar that it can never be occupied again, and moved amid scenes and localities which the hand of time or the violence of man has greatly altered. To sustain accurately the character of such a one in the composition of a treatise that shall, not only with the mob, but with sound judges, pass for his, is a task which, I venture to say, it is beyond the power of any man to achieve. Certain it is, that, unless the case before us form an exception, the thing never has been done. Many literary forgeries have been uttered, some for amusement, some with a desire to deceive; but *invariably* the deception has been detected by some departures, more or less, from what consistency required. Even where the manner, style, opinions, and prejudices of the party to whom the writing is ascribed have been successfully copied, it has almost, without exception, been found impossible for the real author so thoroughly to evacuate his mind of his *own* peculiarities as not to make unconsciously some unlucky transference of these to his subject, by which he has been detected. In regard to these documents, however, the forgery—if they

are forgeries—has been so skilfully managed, that nothing incongruous with the known circumstances of the pretended authors has ever been detected. They come before us as the productions of Jewish Christians, or they give us the accounts of Jewish Christians, who were living in Palestine at the beginning of the Christian era; and, with this assumption, everything in them tallies. Their authors look at things exactly as a Jew who had embraced Christianity would at that peculiar crisis look at them. They indicate a living familiarity with localities, usages, ceremonies, and persons existing in Judea at that time, such as only a native of Judea could be supposed to possess. They employ a dialect which any one but a Jew of the first century would have found it as difficult to imitate as it would be for a German to write in one of the provincial dialects of England, or an Englishman to write in the *patois* of France or Switzerland.* With a boldness that in a forger would amount to foolhardiness, they multiply the chances of detection by detailing minute circumstances and particulars; yet not one of these can be shown to indicate a later age than that sup-

* Winer, who has studied the New Testament dialect with more success than any before him, pronounces it "a Judaized Greek, which to the native Greeks was for the most part unintelligible, and an object of their contempt."—*Grammatik des Neutest. Sprachidioms, u. s. w.*, § 3. The learned L. de Dieu goes the length of asserting that "it would be easier for Europeans to imitate the elegance of Plato and Aristotle, than for Plato and Aristotle to interpret the New Testament for us."—*Praef. ad. Gram. Or.*

posed, not one of them can be proved to be erroneously described, while some of them are described with a peculiarity of exactness such as bespeaks the presence of one actually living at the time and among the objects to which he refers.* That these circumstances *prove* that the Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is not averred. But they do prove that if these treatises are forgeries, they are the most marvellously ingenious forgeries the world has ever seen. They prove, further, that the hypothesis which would ascribe the composition of these Gospels to some literary Gentile Christians of the latter part of the second century, is, under whatever form it may assume, utterly incredible. That *one* Gentile Christian could at that period so exactly personate a Jew living in Judea a century or a century and a half before, is a thing hardly within the limits of possibility. That *four* Gentile Christians should do this, and all with equal success, is what no sound mind can believe.

Having thus ascertained that no antecedent objection arising from the books themselves lies in the way of our examining into their authenticity, but rather that the preliminary probability inclines the other way, we may now proceed to ask, What evidence of a *direct* kind can these writings supply of their genuineness? what vouchers can they adduce,

* See the admirable observations on this head by Hug, Introduction, p. 12, ff. Fosdick's Translation; also Horne's Introd., vol. i, p. 89, ff., eighth edition.

on the ground of which we, in these later ages, may receive them as the productions of the men whose names they bear?

Now, the proper evidence of the genuineness of a book is that it has from the first been received as genuine by those whose opportunities best fitted them to judge, and whose private interests did not incline them to a hasty or prejudiced decision on the subject. If, in addition to this, it can be shown that the book has been accepted as genuine by great numbers of people, living at considerable distances from each other, or spread over an extensive territory, between whom there could be no collusion, but who, on the contrary, would be sure to be brought into keen antagonism by any attempt among one class of them or in one locality, to introduce as genuine a book which had not previously enjoyed this reputation; the evidence rises in amount and force, and approaches as near to *demonstration* as the nature of the subject admits. It is upon this basis of *general acceptance* that the claims of all ancient books to be received as genuine rest; and it is upon this basis that the genuineness of the four Gospels must be vindicated. The evidence for them, therefore, in this respect, is the same *in kind* as that for the ancient classics; that it immensely transcends *in degree* what can be adduced for any of these, I hope to be able to show.

The shortest and most direct way of proving this general acceptance of a book, is to adduce passages

from other writers by whom it has been cited under the title it bears. Against evidence of this sort there can be no appeal. "The medium of proof," as Paley observes, "is here of all others the most unquestionable, the least liable to any practices of fraud, and is not diminished by the lapse of ages. Bishop Burnet," he continues, "in the 'History of his own Times,' inserts various extracts from 'Clarendon's History.' *One* such insertion is a proof that 'Clarendon's History' was extant at the time Bishop Burnet wrote, that it had been read by Bishop Burnet as a work of Lord Clarendon, and also regarded by him as an authentic account of the transactions which it relates; and it will be proof of these points a thousand years hence, or as long as the books exist."* It is on this principle that the editors of the classics frequently prefix to their editions a collection of extracts from ancient authors under the title of "Testimonia Veterum;" these are the vouchers for the antiquity and reputation, and, consequently, for the genuineness of the writing to which they relate.

When we come to apply this method of proof to the four evangelists, we find that a firm and unbroken chain of testimony in their favour carries us up to the closing part of the second century of the Christian era, say A. D. 180, when it is manifest that they were universally recognised as authentic histories of Jesus Christ, and the genuine produc-

* Evidences of Christianity, part i, chap. ix, § 1.

tions of those whose names they bear. Beyond this point the line of testimony becomes less distinct partly because a smaller number of witnesses exists whose writings we can examine, partly because the evidence which those that still remain afford is less precise and full than that afforded by the writers subsequent to the period mentioned. On this account, I shall, in the first instance, argue the question of the genuineness of the four Gospels on the assumption that we possess no historical evidence of a direct kind of their existence at an earlier date than the latter part of the second century. After having argued the question on this ground, I shall endeavour to point out the confirmation which the conclusion at which I hope to arrive receives from those references to the four Gospels which may be gleaned from writers of an earlier date.

CHAPTER II.

ARGUMENT FOR THE GENUINENESS OF THE FOUR GOSPELS, FROM THE FACT OF THEIR UNIVERSAL RECEPTION IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TOWARD THE CLOSE OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

It is here assumed that it is an ascertained historical fact that, at the period mentioned, these four Gospels were in universal use among the Christians in all parts of the world, and were universally recognised by them as the productions of the men whose names they bear. Into the proof of this I need not here enter, as it is admitted by all, whether friend or foe, whose opinion is of the least worth in such a matter.

Now, it is on this ascertained fact that I would at present rest the argument in support of the genuineness of those writings. I take this as the fact to be accounted for—the phenomenon to be explained; and I propose to show that the *only* hypothesis on which this can be done, is the hypothesis that these writings are what they profess to be—the genuine productions of the disciples of Jesus Christ, whose names they bear. To the legitimacy and conclusiveness of such a line of argument, no one, I presume, will object, as it is only an ap-

plication to this question of the Baconian method, on the validity of which all science rests.

In order duly to estimate the argumentative worth of this fact, it is requisite to consider, in the *first* place, that it conveys to us the testimony of a community *deeply interested in ascertaining the truth upon the question at issue.* To yield religious submission to any man's teaching, or, what is the same thing in effect, to receive any writing as a religious rule, is at all times a serious matter; for one knows not how much evil a step of this sort may involve, or how seriously it may affect one's eternal interests. Every thoughtful man, therefore, will naturally be chary in admitting any such pretensions, and will scrutinize with a jealous eye all claims to subject him to such an authority. Especially will this feeling be strong in the mind of one who has embraced Christianity, for the more awful aspects under which that religion presents the issues of human responsibility, necessarily operate in leading its adherents to be very solicitous that they come under no control of a kind that shall influence their spiritual well-being, of which they are not well assured that it is claimed by one who has been authorized from above to demand their homage. In the case of the primitive Christians, also, there was another guarantee for their scrupulosity in receiving any books as apostolic, arising from the circumstances in which they were placed, as liable to persecution for the sake of their religion. As no man likes to be per-

secuted, if he can help it, so every man who is placed in danger of suffering in this way, will naturally seek to diminish, as far as may be, the sources of exposure to such suffering. But clearly, by increasing the number of their sacred books, the Christians multiplied their risk of calamity from this cause; for, as it was for obedience to what these books enjoin that they had to endure persecution, the greater the number of books to which they yielded submission, the greater became their risk of falling under the iron rod of the persecutor. By the mere instinct of self-preservation, therefore, guided by the simplest dictates of common sense, they would be led to examine with scrupulous care the pretensions of every book claiming to be one of their sacred and authoritative muniments. It follows, that whatever books they did receive as such, must have come to them with evidence of their genuineness, *such as could not be resisted or gainsayed.*

Secondly. Not only were the early Christians thus deeply interested in not being deceived in a question of this sort, but they were persons every way qualified to arrive at a sound judgment on such a point. Taken as a class, the Christians of the second century were by much the most intelligent and virtuous portion of the community. Their writers were men of higher intellectual vigour and much clearer discernment than the cotemporary authors who were heathen; for among the latter we

shall seek in vain for any whose pretensions in these respects will bear to be put for a moment in competition with those of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian. As a body, their minds were occupied with much nobler thoughts and projects than engrossed the thoughts of the people among whom they dwelt; and their horror of everything corrupt and insincere elevated them still higher in the scale of moral excellence. In the hands of such persons, therefore, we may confidently believe that any question in which they were interested would receive both an *able* and an *honest* investigation. Let it be kept in mind, moreover, that in their day there could exist no great difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory decision on a question such as that which the early Christians had, in the case supposed, to determine. If these writings are genuine, they must have been handed down to the Christians who lived at the end of the second century, through an unbroken series of witnesses, from the days of the apostles; while, on the other hand, supposing them spurious, there must have been a time, long subsequent to the apostolic age, when they *began* to be known in their present form. The sole question, therefore, which the early Christians had to settle, in order to assure themselves of the genuineness of the Gospels, was simply this: Have these been always received in the Churches as the productions of the men whose names they bear; or, did they, at a period long subsequent to the death

of these men, come into use among us? This is the one question they had to solve; and it is interesting to observe that they fully recognised this, in fact, as the only question before them in this inquiry; for the ground on which the early Christian writers assert the genuineness of any book in the New Testament, is the *common notoriety* that such a book had always been recognised as such by the Christians. Now, of this kind of evidence every man of sense can judge. It is a proof patent to the intelligence even of the least educated in the community. It requires no ingenuity to apprehend it, however much it may require to set it aside. We may safely say, then, that when a body so intelligent, so honest, and so earnest, as were the early Christians, set themselves to determine, as a matter in which they were deeply interested both for time and for eternity, whether or not these books are genuine, they could not possibly be mistaken in their decision, or seduced into error by any sinister influence. It is a matter which must have been to them as clearly ascertainable, and upon evidence of exactly the same kind, as the fact of the use of the metre version of the Psalms during the past two centuries in the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, or the use of Dr. Watts's version in the Congregational Churches of England since the time of his death to the present day, is a fact of which the humblest member of any of these Churches may fully assure himself. And being thus ascertainable,

we may rest assured that the claims of each book would be most carefully determined, and none admitted into the Canon, or Rule of Faith, unless such as were certainly and indubitably genuine. In point of fact, we know that so certain were the early Christians of the genuineness of the Gospels, that in their minds this was identified with the truth of Christianity itself, and that they no more thought of doubting the one than they thought of renouncing the other.

The fact, then, of the universal reception of the four Gospels as genuine by the Christians in the closing part of the second century, is one which comes before us, not only supported by ample historical testimony, but free from any enfeebling circumstance which might detract from its argumentative weight. In this fact, consequently, viewed simply by itself, we have strong presumptive evidence that these writings are what they profess to be. To raise this presumption to moral certainty, we have only to inquire whether such a universal reception of the Gospels were *possible*, on the supposition that they are not genuine; in other words, whether, on such a supposition, this fact can be accounted for.

For this purpose, let us, in the first instance, take the first three Gospels, which closely resemble each other, apart from the fourth. Now, if these three writings are not the productions of the men whose names they bear, but are forgeries of a later age,

they must have been produced in one of three ways, —namely, one of them must have been copied from another, or both the others; or each writer must have made use of documents peculiar to himself, but having much in common with those used by the other two; or they may all have derived their accounts from tradition,—the traditions preserved by one being partly the same with those preserved by the others, partly differing from them. Let us consider each of them in order.

In the first case, we must regard one of these Gospels as the original, and view the others as copies from it,—or two of them as original, and the remaining one as a copy from them; the copy in either case being, of course, intended as an *amended* and *improved* edition of the original. But, on this supposition, it is manifestly impossible to account for the *universal* reception of all the three as equally genuine; for those Churches which received the original would necessarily reject the copies as interpolated, while those which received the copies would reject the original as imperfect; so that, had these writings been got up in the way specified under the first hypothesis, such a fact as their reception equally by all the Churches would never have occurred. Let us pass, then, to the second hypothesis, namely, that each compiler had a set of documents peculiar to himself from which he made up his Gospel. In this case it must be supposed that the extant Gospels are compilations from certain histories of Jesus Christ

which were in circulation among the Christians in the second century, of which the unknown authors of these Gospels possessed separate sets, from which they made up each his compilation. Now, according to the hypothesis, these compilations completely and everywhere supplanted the original documents, so that no trace of them was ever afterward found. But is such a thing possible? How could compilations by unknown authors avail to supplant *everywhere* documents, some of which, we may believe, were contemporary with the existence of the Churches in which they circulated, and all of which would be objects of respect and affection to the Christians, as the records from which they and their fathers had learned the history of their Saviour? There are only *two* cases in which a new record of our Lord's life could have supplanted those already in circulation: the one is, when it came with greater authority than they possessed,—the other is, when it was so perfect as to include all that they contained in one continuous narration. But, in the instance before us neither of these cases occurs; for an anonymous compilation, bearing what all the Christians must have known to be a spurious title, could never be regarded as of *greater authority* than the documents from which it was made up; and none of these writings could be accepted as perfect, because none of them is complete,—each of them containing something that is not found in the others. It must be manifest, then, to every man's capacity, that had

these Gospels been got in the way specified by the second hypothesis, their universal reception never could have occurred. To believe this possible, we must believe that the whole body of Christians throughout the world, with one consent, and under a simultaneous impulse, though without any assignable reason, adopted a set of narratives, drawn up by they knew not whom, of our Lord's life: banished into oblivion all other narratives, though long possessed and much venerated by them, and though substantially as good as those they accepted in their place; and, from that moment forward, held these documents, thus accepted, in such awful reverence that never afterward would they suffer them to be altered, superseded or rivalled! Those who reject the belief in the genuineness of these books for the belief of anything so monstrous and unnatural as this, may be most justly said to "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel." There only remains the third hypothesis, namely, that the first three Gospels were compiled by unknown persons from narratives handed down by oral tradition in the Churches from the days of the apostles. Here it may be conceded that, had there been no written record of our Lord's life, but only traditions handed down from one generation to another, it is not an improbable thing, that during the course of the second century three persons, or even more, might have undertaken to collect these traditions into one continuous narrative. But against the supposition that this was the way in

which the extant Gospels were composed, there lies the insuperable difficulty of their universal reception as of *equal* authority, and as *alike* genuine, by the Christians at the close of that century; for as the narrative is not exactly the same in all, as in some cases the discrepancy between them is considerable, we cannot imagine that all the Churches would agree to hold them in equal respect when offered simply as collections of current traditions. But the *differences* of these narratives do not furnish the most serious objection to this hypothesis; their *general argument* and *frequent identity* afford a fact much more unaccountable on it. It is characteristic of oral traditions, that, though they may preserve a general similarity of outline, they continually separate further and further from each other, as time elapses, in matters of detail. Hence, any fact left to be perpetuated only by oral tradition, comes in a very few years to be presented under extremely different aspects in different places. The fancy of one man, the forgetfulness of another, the craft, it may be, of a third, the ignorance or dulness of a fourth, and many such causes, conspire to pollute the separate streams of tradition, and to make the deposits which, at any given point in their progress, they leave, strangely to differ from each other. As an invariable result, it is found, that whatever be the subject of the tradition, whether civil or religious, the preservation of a prevailing agreement in the form, and circumstances, and details with which the same fact

is presented in different places, is a thing that seems impossible. And if this be true of a single fact, how much stronger does the inference become in the case of a lengthened narrative full of details of the most minute and varied character? The chances that such a narrative should be conveyed along *three* different lines of oral tradition in a state of substantial agreement are extremely small; that it should be conveyed not only in a state of substantial agreement, but with an agreement so close as that subsisting among the three synoptical Gospels, is so impossible that no calculation could state the chances against it. Tradition cannot hand down a single anecdote without presenting it in manifold varieties of form; it is mathematically impossible that it should transmit a long series of narratives by three different channels, so as to preserve all but entire agreement among them, not only in the general, but in respect of persons, places, events, thoughts and words.

We thus see that on none of these hypotheses, as to the composition of the first three Gospels, can their universal reception by the Christians be satisfactorily accounted for; and as these hypotheses exhaust the possibilities of the case, we are reduced to the alternative either of admitting that they are not forgeries, or of denying the fact of their universal reception. But to deny the latter, would be in the highest degree unphilosophical; for there would be an end of all science, if we might first admit a fact,

and then, when we found that we could not account for it on some predetermined hypothesis, were at liberty to ignore or deny it. The first principle of the inductive method is, that the facts must determine the theory, not the theory prejudge the facts. The only course, therefore, open for the truly scientific inquirer in the case before us, is, to renounce the hypothesis which he finds to be incompatible with the facts, and accept these three Gospels as genuine.

Let us now take the whole of the four Gospels. Assuming them to be genuine, it is easy to account for their universal reception in the Church; but if we suppose them spurious, the question fairly arises: How came they to *pass for genuine*, and to be accepted so generally, at so early a period, as the productions of the men whose names they bear? On this hypothesis, it must be supposed that some person or persons living subsequently to the age of the apostles wrote these books, and sent them forth under forged names. But before this can be believed, certain questions must be satisfactorily answered. 1. In the absence of the *only* evidence on the ground of which these books could be received as genuine, namely, the belief and testimony of the preceding age, how came it to pass that the deceit was successfully imposed upon the whole Christian world? or how can it be accounted for that the whole of the Christians then alive were persuaded to receive as genuine, books for which they must

have *known* that the only competent evidence of genuineness was wanting? 2. If the Christians did not in good faith receive these books as genuine, but only agreed to *pretend* to do so, how is it to be explained that so gross an act of imposition upon the world should have been accomplished by a simultaneous collusion of many thousands of persons scattered over various parts of the earth, having no means of concocting such an extensive scheme of fraud, and being, besides, in all other respects, noted for their honesty, integrity, and candour. 3. If a cheat was intended in affixing to these books the names they bear, is it not unaccountable that the names selected should, with one exception, be those of persons by no means distinguished *otherwise* among the disciples of Christ? If the authority of a famous name was required to sustain the imposture, why pass by those of Peter, of Paul, or of James, to fix upon such as those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, men round whom no glory gathers, except as we admit their claims to the authorship of these books? 4. On the hypothesis that these four Gospels are spurious, how shall we account for their general reception, notwithstanding the *discrepancies* which they reciprocally present? Supposing their genuineness established on competent testimony, and by the continuous tradition of the preceding age, we can easily see that these discrepancies would form no barrier to their being accepted as the actual works of the men by whom they were thus known to be

written, because in this case the external evidence would be such as to compel conviction in spite of any difficulties which might arise from the contents of the books themselves. But if they are supposed to have been forged, then, as they would come utterly unsupported by any external evidence, and as their pretensions would, in that case, rest upon internal grounds alone, it is utterly incredible that, in the face of the discrepancies among them, they should have been all viewed as of *equal* authority. 5. These Gospels are the productions of Jewish writers, (unless Luke be an exception,) and they are composed in a style which must have been new to the native Greeks, and which we know from direct testimony was very despicable in their eyes;* yet it is through the Gentile branch of the Church that they have come down to us, as books received among Greeks as well as Jews as of sacred authority. How is this to be accounted for on the supposition that they are not genuine? Is it credible that writings composed in a barbarous dialect, by persons utterly unknown, should have found such favour with the fastidious Greeks, as all to be welcomed by them without the least evidence, placed by them in a position of authority, and handed down by them as the only true and genuine narratives of the history

* "Accustomed," says Lactantius, speaking of educated men of his day, "to sweet and polished orations or poems, they spurn as sordid the simple and common language of the divine literature." —*Instit.*, lib. vi, c. 21.

of Him by whom the religion they had embraced had been founded?

It must be plain, I think, to every candid mind, that these questions place difficulties in the way of believing these writings to be spurious, which it is not going too far to call insuperable. In fact, if these writings are not genuine, we must believe that all the Christians in the world, at the end of the second century, went suddenly mad, so as to suffer themselves to be persuaded that they had always, for a century at least, possessed books which, had one sane man been left among them, he would have been able to demonstrate had only come into existence a few years before. The man who can believe this must possess a mind so strangely constituted, that his judgment upon any point of evidence, resting upon the ordinary laws of human thought and action, can hardly be entitled to a moment's consideration.*

* See on the subject of this chapter, Norton's valuable treatise on the Genuineness of the Gospels, 2 vols., 8vo. London, 1847.

CHAPTER III.

DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE IN FAVOUR OF THE FOUR GOSPELS FROM WRITINGS ANTECEDENT TO THE LAST QUARTER OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

The reasoning of the preceding section has been directed to the end of showing, that, even on the assumption that no reference whatever existed, in any writer previous to the close of the second century, to any of the four Gospels as extant in his day, it would yet be impossible to account for their universal reception by the Christians as the only authentic records of our Lord's life on earth, on any other supposition than that they are the genuine productions of the men whose names they bear. In assuming this ground, however, the opponents of the Gospels demand of us a concession which only, *ex gratia*, and for the sake of argument, can we consent to yield. I have shown that even when the concession is made to them, they can gain nothing by it. I would now endeavour to vindicate the historical evidence of the existence of the Gospels from the apostolic age to the latter part of the second century, from the attempts which have been recently made, especially by Eichhorn and Strauss, to invalidate it.

The earliest witness for any of the Gospels is the author of the Acts of the Apostles. From the prologue to this book, compared with that to the Gospel by Luke, there can be no reasonable doubt that the same person is the author of both these compositions, and this is confirmed by a comparison of the language and style of both. Now, the steady testimony of Christian antiquity assigns the authorship of the Acts of the Apostles to St. Luke; and with this the internal evidence agrees; especially the circumstance that Luke was with Paul at the very times at which the author of the Acts was with him. From this it follows with great conclusiveness, that Luke, the companion of Paul, was the author of the third Gospel; and as this was written before the Acts, and as the Acts must have been written before the termination of St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome, *i. e.*, before the year 63 or 64, the antiquity of this Gospel seems to rest upon a very solid basis of evidence.

With this witness Strauss deals in a singularly timid and unsatisfactory manner. He does not venture to deny the authenticity of the Acts, but he insinuates that a book which states so many "marvellous" things concerning Paul, and so much that is "at variance with Paul's genuine epistles," (though what the points of variance are we are not informed, and to the countrymen of Paley such information would be both novel and curious,) is one which he finds it extremely difficult to reconcile

with the notion that it was "written by a companion of that apostle." He then hints that the author of this Gospel and the Acts nowhere informs his readers that he was Paul's companion, which Dr. Strauss thinks a most unaccountable omission, supposing him to have been so. After all, however, he admits that "it is indeed possible that this companion of Paul may have composed his two works at a time, and under circumstances when he was no longer protected by apostolic influence against the tide of tradition,"—an admission for which we are duly grateful, as it involves, at all events, the further admission that the third Gospel must have been produced within the first century, but one for which the author has no more authority than we have for going the full length of conceding to Luke the authorship of both books; nay, far less, as has been well shown among others by Professor Tholuck.* In fine, after remarking that "the breaking off of the Acts at the point of Paul's imprisonment might have been the result of many causes," the whole is summed up by the magisterial dictum—"At all events, such testimony, standing alone, is wholly insufficient to decide the historical worth of the Gospel." The exact meaning of this I do not profess to have penetrated, but the purport of it one sees easily enough; it is obviously to put down by contempt what cannot be answered by argu-

* In his Glaubwürdigkeit der Evangelischen Geschichte. See Beard's Voices of the Church.

ment. I have above stated the evidence deducible from the Acts in favour of the Gospel; I have adduced Dr. Strauss's objections; and I now leave it with my readers to determine how far these objections apply and have force. I imagine most will agree in thinking that if the evidence of testimony is to be set aside on mere subjective grounds, such as those which Dr. Strauss adduces, there must be an end of all such evidence in any case.

The next class of witnesses for the Gospels is composed of the apostolic fathers. In the invaluable collections of Lardner are adduced numerous instances in which these writers have made very obvious allusions to passages in the four Gospels, and one or two cases in which they have apparently directly quoted them. These instances have been subjected by Eichhorn and others to a very rigid scrutiny, for the purpose of destroying the evidence they furnish that the extant Gospels were known to the apostolic fathers; but, as appears to me, without success. The objections which these learned men urge against the passages adduced, resolve themselves mainly into two. In the first place, it is said that in those passages which cite the very words, or nearly the very words of the Gospels, there is no intimation that the author is making a quotation; from which it is inferred that the passage is cited from oral and not from written tradition. But the same objection would apply to the numerous citations which these apostolic fathers

make from the epistles of the New Testament; these are usually without any signs of quotation—so that if this circumstance is of value as against the Gospels, it is of no less value as against the epistles. If in the one case it may justly be inferred, from the absence of the signs of quotation, that the passage apparently cited had reached the writer by oral tradition, the same inference would be equally just in the other case; and thus it would follow, that the very expressions of a private letter might get abroad, and be repeated as sayings of the author of that letter, before the letter itself was written, which is absurd. This objection, therefore, proves too much, and, consequently, cannot be held as proving anything. The second objection urged against the testimonies of the apostolic fathers, in behalf of the Gospels, is, that by far the greater part of them are so general in the allusions they are supposed to make to passages occurring in the Gospels, that no weight can be attached to them. Now this appears to me a singularly unfortunate objection. Instead of invalidating the evidence contained in these allusions, in favour of the antiquity of the Gospels, this peculiarity in these allusions furnishes the strongest argument in favour of that antiquity. For when does an author feel himself at liberty to deal in general allusions to other writings, and, instead of formally citing them, to invigorate his own style, or point his own sentences, by a few words borrowed from them, or a passing

hint at something they contain? Is it not when he may safely take for granted the familiarity of his readers with the authors he thus passingly lauds? and does not this feature in the writings of any author invariably prompt the inference, that he has, in preparing his work, assumed the fact of such familiarity? and would not a critic be held to have offered a just stricture upon a work which was interlarded with fragments of passages borrowed from, and continual passing allusions made to, writings with which his readers could not be acquainted, if he condemned it as pedantic and unintelligible? Take, for instance, a volume of Hazlitt's æsthetical works, besprinkled, as these are, all over with phrases from Shakspeare, and allusions to his plays; put this into the hands of an intelligent foreigner who understands our language, direct his attention to the fact that these phrases are to be found in Shakspeare, and that these allusions are to scenes in his dramas, though Hazlitt hardly ever gives a reference or makes a formal citation to guide the reader to this fact; would not the just and natural inference of the stranger be, not only that Hazlitt was himself well versed in Shakspeare, but that before such a style of writing could be at all tolerated by the public, they, too, must have been well acquainted with the writings of the dramatist? My argument, therefore, in reply to Eichhorn and his party is, that the mere fact that these early writers have so frequently clothed their own sentiments in

words which we find extant in the Gospels, and have so often enforced their positions by making allusions to events recorded there, ought to be held, in all fairness, as showing not only that the Gospels were then extant, but that they were familiarly known as belonging to the classics of the Christian community. What confirms this conclusion is, that exactly in the same way of general allusion and partial citation, do these apostolic fathers frequently make use of the writings of the Old Testament, and the epistolary writings of the New.*

In the age next to that of the apostles, and at the commencement of the second century, lived Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis. Irenæus† informs us that he

* Strauss insinuates that, as doubts exist of the genuineness of the writings of the apostolic fathers, no weight can be attached to any evidence which their writings may furnish of the existence of the Gospels in their day. To this it may suffice to reply, that the parts of these writings from which most of the testimonies in favour of the evangelical narratives are drawn, have never been called in question on any grounds; and besides, that, with the exception of the larger rescension of the epistles of Ignatius, the non-integrity of these writings has never yet been shown on any sound critical grounds. See Lardner's Works, ii, 11–105. Macknight's Gospel History, b. iii, c. 1, sec. 2.

† Adv. Haer., l. v, c. 33; comp. Euseb. Hist. Eccl., l. iii, c. 39. Cave (Hist. Lit., i, 29) places him in the year 110; Basnage in 115, and Pagi in 116, (see Lardner, Works, ii, 106.) Strauss gives a very unfair account of Papias. "He is said to have been an auditor of John, (probably the presbyter,) and to have suffered martyrdom under Marcus Aurelius (161–180)." This account omits what is best known, and inserts what is altogether doubtful concerning him; the object being to lower as much as possible the value of his testimony. It is *not* "probably John the presbyter," of whom Papias was a hearer; it is all but certain that the

was "a hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp," who, it is well known, was a disciple of the apostle of that name. He styles him also "an ancient man," (*ἀρχαῖος ἀνὴς*,) which, considering that Irenæus wrote toward the end of the second century, must be regarded as placing Papias very near the apostolic age. From this important witness we learn, that in his day the Gospel according to Matthew was in circulation among the Christians, and that the Gospel according to Mark was also well known.*

Much effort has been used by the enemies of the Gospels to discredit the testimony of this ancient bishop. Strauss, while admitting that he does attest that an apostle wrote a Gospel history, nevertheless affirms that he does not certify us that "it was identical with that which came afterward to be circulated in the Church under his name." This relates

John spoken of here was the apostle. The words of Irenæus are, "who was a hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp." Now had John the presbyter been referred to, this qualifying title would have been added; for *the* John of Christian antiquity was not the presbyter, but the apostle; and, besides, the mention of Polycarp, who was the disciple of the apostle, and not of the presbyter, seems still further to fix this meaning to the passage. Add, also, that the testimony of Irenæus, who was the disciple of Polycarp, and may be supposed to have known something about the matter, ought to settle a point of this sort. Again, on what authority is it said, that Papias suffered martyrdom under Marcus Aurelius, in the end of the second century? The oldest authority for this, as far as we know, is that of the "Chronicon Alexandrinum," a work of the seventh or eighth century, and therefore worth next to nothing as an authority on such a point.

* Lardner, Works, ii, 106–111.

to what Papias says of the Gospel by Matthew. Now, to me it appears marvellous how any man, with the statement of Papias before him, could bring himself to utter what Strauss has here asserted. The words of this witness are: "Matthew wrote in the Hebrew dialect, *τὰ λόγια*"—an expression which Strauss himself admits to mean "a writing comprehending the acts and fate of Jesus." Here, then, we have it certified to us by a very competent witness, that the apostle Matthew had written a Gospel before the early part of the second century. This much, therefore, is ascertained, that Matthew did write a history of our Lord. It is also certain that Eusebius, by whom this testimony has been preserved, understood Papias as speaking of the extant Gospel; and Strauss admits that the fathers of the Church "did apply this testimony decidedly to our first Gospel." What is there, then, to forbid our receiving this testimony of the ancient bishop, in proof of the apostolic origin of our first Gospel? The answer of Strauss is, that "the manuscript of which he [Papias] speaks cannot be absolutely identical with our Gospel; for, according to the statement given by Papias, Matthew wrote in the Hebrew language." But though Papias says that Matthew wrote in the Hebrew language, he does not say that he did not also write in the Greek; so that we are perfectly at liberty to suppose, as far as his testimony goes, that the Hebrew Gospel was a translation from the original Greek, or that Mat-

thew, having first written in Hebrew, afterward wrote in Greek, or to make any other supposition of the same sort which appears to us most eligible. The case, as a question of evidence, stands thus: Papias depones to the fact that there was in his day extant a Gospel history, known to be from the pen of St. Matthew, and written in the Hebrew dialect; and this fact is repeatedly asserted by others of the fathers. Now, that Hebrew Gospel has perished, but in its place we have a Greek Gospel, purporting to be from the same pen, and received as such by the unanimous consent of Christian antiquity. It follows, either that St. Matthew wrote both a Hebrew and a Greek Gospel, (or, what comes to the same thing for our present purpose, authorized a translation from the one into the other of these tongues,) or that Christian antiquity erred in receiving the Greek Gospel as St. Matthew's. But if we adopt this latter supposition, we must adopt it clogged with this serious difficulty, viz., that the Christian Church, after having been in possession of an authentic record of our Lord's life and fate, from the pen of an accredited apostle, consented to cast that aside, and to receive in its place a forgery, perpetrated in the name of the apostle, and not identical in its statements with that which they had previously possessed. Is this, we ask, credible? Is it not much more probable that Matthew wrote originally in Greek, and that for some temporary purpose he prepared, or caused to be prepared, a

translation into the Aramaic dialect, which, being limited in its circulation, and not designed for permanency, was allowed to perish; the Church feeling, that being possessed of the original in a language generally known, it was the less needful to be careful about preserving the translation into a language which was fast dying out?

The testimony of Papias concerning Mark's Gospel is adduced as what he had learned from "John the Presbyter," and is as follows: "Mark being the interpreter (*ἑρμηνευτὴς*) of Peter, wrote exactly whatever he remembered of the things done and spoken by Christ, though not in order. For neither had he himself heard the Lord, nor followed him. But, as I have said [he wrote] after Peter, who gave instructions as need required, but not in the shape of a regular narrative of the Lord's sayings, so that Mark erred in nothing, while thus writing some things as he remembered them. For this one thing he took care to provide for, not to omit anything of what he had heard, nor to falsify aught therein."* Here is a testimony than which nothing can be more distinct and precise. It asserts that the Gospel by Mark was written from the instructions (*διδασκαλίας*) of the apostle Peter—that Mark was, in this respect the medium of communication (*ἑρμηνευτὴς*) between Peter and the public, and that Mark so came after Peter (*ὕστερον Πέτρῳ*) that he erred in nothing. Be it remembered also, that this testimony comes to us

* Euseb. H. E., l. iii, c. 39.

from the very age of Peter and Mark. It is that of a contemporary and companion of apostles, and is conveyed to us by one of his own pupils, whose character as a pious but not very strong-minded man* affords the best guarantee for the truth of his report in a matter of this sort, inasmuch as the most faithful of all relators of simple matters of fact are conscientious, unimaginative, single-minded men. What, then, has Dr. Strauss to say against this witness? His first remark is: "Ecclesiastical writers have assumed that this passage from Papias refers to our second Gospel, though it does not say anything of the kind." This is curiously phrased. "Ecclesiastical writers!" This may mean writers of the second or writers of the nineteenth century, according as the mind of the reader may suggest; and in this ambiguity lies the only chance of saving the dictum from absolute ridicule. For let us state the case fairly, by substituting for "ecclesiastical writers" "the Christian fathers," and the absurdity of the author's remark will at once appear. The Christian fathers, knowing of but one Gospel by St. Mark, and finding Papias reporting a statement of John the presbyter as to Mark's writing a Gospel under the superintendence of St. Peter, concluded that, as Mark did not write two Gospels, this testimony appertained to the book which they and the universal Church received as the Gospel according to Mark. What is there here of mere assumption?

* Σφόδρα γάρ τοι σμικρὸς ὢν τὸν νοῦν.—Euseb. l. c.

Suppose a writer of the reign of George I. of England had recorded that he had heard his master, who had the best means of knowing, say that Milton wrote "Paradise Lost" under particular circumstances, who would fancy there was anything wrong in "assuming" that the "Paradise Lost," of which this was said, is identical with the "Paradise Lost" which we now possess? Or suppose a writer in the time of Augustus had recorded some facts concerning the composition of "Livy's History," and that we found several subsequent writers quoting this testimony, and unhesitatingly assuming that it was "Livy's History" of which the writer spoke, who would not stand amazed were such a remark as that of Dr. Strauss obtruded in the shape of a reason why *we*, in the present day, should, after all, doubt whether it was not some other book, passing under the same name, to which the ancient writer had reference? Such extravagance of scepticism may be safely left to work its own overthrow.

But Dr. Strauss goes on to say, that the testimony of Papias is, "besides, inapplicable to it" (the second Gospel.) This remark is more to the point; for if it could be shown that what Papias says is totally inapplicable to our second Gospel, we should be constrained to admit that his testimony is invalid. But is it so? Let us hear Dr. Strauss: "Our second Gospel cannot have originated from recollections of Peter's instructions, *i. e.*, from a source peculiar to itself, since it is evidently a com-

pilation, whether from memory or otherwise, from the first and third Gospels." It is well when one does make an assertion to make it boldly and roundly, for it has thereby the better chance of commanding assent from those who are prone to give a writer credit for being able to prove what he fearlessly asserts. But Dr. Strauss hardly keeps within the bounds of prudence here; for when he declares that Mark's Gospel is "*evidently* a compilation" from those of Matthew and Luke, he forgets that what Augustine was the first to suggest, or rather timidly to hint at with a "*videtur*;" what men like Le Clerc, Michaelis, Koppe, Eichhorn, Lardner, and Townson, with a host of others, have rejected as untenable; and what it cost Griesbach an elaborate "Commentatio" to render even plausibly apparent, though the materials for arriving at a conclusion upon it had been for centuries in the hands of thousands, cannot be so very "evident," after all. He might have remembered, also, that such men as Hug and Olshausen, while inclining to the opinion that Mark probably made use, at least, of Matthew's Gospel, have endeavoured to show how this is, nevertheless, compatible with what Papias records concerning the part sustained by St. Peter in the composition of the second Gospel.

Besides this, the only other reason assigned by him for thinking that it is not to the second Gospel that Papias refers, is, that "the remark of Papias that Mark wrote without order (*οὐ τάξει*) will not

apply to our Gospel." But the question arises, What did Papias mean by this remark? Dr. Strauss magistratically, as is his wont, asserts, that it is "a total renunciation of chronological connexion which Papias can alone have meant to attribute to him;" and this, he adds, "is not to be found in the second Gospel." Now, it is true that Mark does not totally renounce chronological order in his narrative, and yet it is quite possible that he may be said to have written *οὐ τάξει*; for most persons will admit that between the extremes of exact chronological order, and no chronological order at all, there are many degrees to which the phrase in question might be applied. It is possible, then, even supposing that *τάξει* here has respect to chronological order, that all that is intended by the expression is, that Mark wrote an account of the sayings and doings of Christ without binding himself to invariably narrate these in the very order in which they occurred. But how comes Dr. Strauss to be so absolutely certain that *τάξει* here has reference to chronology? Is there no order but *chronological* order?—or can *γράφειν ταξεὶ* mean nothing but "to observe chronological order in writing?" A scholar, such as Dr. Strauss professes to be, needs not to be told that in the classics *τάξις* has reference to order in *space* much more frequently than to order in *time;* that its most common usage was to designate a rank of soldiers; and that, consequently, the passage before us may be rendered, "he wrote the sayings and doings of Christ,

not in rank," *i. e.*, not in a continuous narrative, but anecdotically, as he learned them from Peter; a species of writing which is perfectly consistent with as much of chronological order as Mark adopts, but which, nevertheless, is not τάξει, a full-rank and unbroken narrative. Or, even supposing Dr. Strauss is right in the sense he puts on the words of Papias, what do they prove? That Papias had not the second Gospel in view when he wrote them? Assuredly not; they only prove that he deemed Mark's arrangement less accurate, in point of chronology, than that of some other narrative with which he had compared it. Now, in this Papias may have committed a mistake; he may have judged Mark by a wrong standard; but how this error of *judgment* should in the least invalidate his testimony to the *matter of fact*, we cannot conceive. A witness is asked by the judge: "Do you know that A. B. wrote this book?" He answers, "Yes, A. B. wrote it; he got the materials of it from C. D., and put them together, though not in such good order as he might." "There," replies the judge, "you are mistaken, the arrangement is very good; but that is not the point which you are called to attest; all we want to know from you is, whether A. B. wrote the book or not?" The witness repeats that he did; he is a witness of unimpeachable character; he had ample means of knowing the fact which he attests, and no subsequent witness contradicts his statement, but all confirm it. In such a case what would be

thought of the sincerity, to say nothing of the sanity, of an advocate who should get up and try to persuade the jury that it could not be of the work libelled that the witness was speaking, because the opinion he had expressed concerning its composition differed very much from that of the learned judge. Such pleading, we suspect, would, in Britain at least, go a good way to damage the cause on behalf of which it was attempted. And yet it is exactly on such a plea that Dr. Strauss, even when we grant him his own premises, would set aside the clear, distinct, highly probable, and amply confirmed testimony of John the presbyter, conveyed through Papias, respecting the apostolic authorship of Mark's Gospel.

But the testimony of Papias, besides being valid, directly as evidence of the existence in his day of the Gospels he mentions, affords evidence also of an indirect kind of the genuineness of the fourth Gospel. His (to use the words of Mr. Norton*) "was a period but just after the death of St. John, when thousands were living who had seen that last survivor of the apostles; many, perhaps, who had made a pilgrimage to Ephesus to behold his countenance, and listen to his voice, and hundreds who belonged to the Church over which he had presided in person. It is incredible, therefore, that before the time of Papias, a spurious Gospel should have been received as his work; and after the time of Papias,

* Evidence of the Genuineness of the Gospels, vol. i, pp. 153, 154.

when the authority of the first three Gospels was established, the attempt to introduce a Gospel falsely ascribed to St. John must have been, if possible, still more impracticable."

From Papias we pass to Justin Martyr, who flourished about the year 140. A philosopher and a man of learning before he became a Christian, Justin was not likely to accept any writings as sacred and authoritative, without being well satisfied of their genuineness; and as most of his writings are of a controversial or apologetic kind, he was not likely to quote any authority, the pretensions of which were not susceptible of the most convincing proof. Now, it is true that he nowhere expressly names any of our extant Gospels by reference to its author; but he makes frequent mention of Memoirs of Jesus Christ, which were in circulation among the Christians of his day, and from them he largely quotes, as of undoubted authority. The question, therefore, which we have to consider is, Can these Memoirs referred to and cited by Justin be identified with any of the four Gospels as we now have them? The following considerations appear to me to place the affirmative answer to this question beyond any reasonable doubt.

1. Justin says that these Memoirs were composed by "apostles of Christ, and those that followed with them,"*—that they contained accounts of "every-

* Dial. cum Tryph., p. 331. D. In this passage Justin uses language which would apply very well as descriptive of the four Gos-

thing concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ"—that they were received and believed by the Christians—and that they were read in the assemblies of the Christians every Sunday along with the writings of the prophets.* Unless, then, these were identical with our present Gospels, we must believe that some book or books were, about the middle of the second century, in common circulation among the Christians, held in the highest authority, believed by them to be of apostolic authorship, read by them in their public assemblies as on a par with the prophetical writings, and held to contain all that was known or believed of the events of our Saviour's life, which yet, in the course of a few years, unaccountably disappeared, so as never more to be mentioned or apparently known in the Church. We find that, in the time of Irenæus, who was for a while Justin's cotemporary, the four Gospels, as we have them, were the only known and recognised sources of information regarding the life of Christ.† Is it possible that between Justin's writing and that of Irenæus, so strange a thing should have happened as that one set of apostolic histories universally received, should

pels. It is worthy of notice, that in the terms used to describe those who, besides apostles, composed these Memoirs, he uses the word which Luke employs to describe himself, ch. i. 3. As the expression is a very peculiar one (*παρακολουθέω*) when so applied, it is hardly possible to resist the conviction that Justin had Luke's words before him when he used it.

* Apol. i, c. 34, 66, 67. I cite from the convenient edition of J. W. J. Braunius. Bonn, 1830.

† Adv. Haer., lib. 3, c. 1.

have disappeared, and another set have come into universal reception in their room, and that not a trace of this should anywhere appear? Such a supposition must be felt by all to be incredible, to be monstrous; but if it be repudiated, the alternative must be embraced, that the Memoirs mentioned by Justin are none other than our four Gospels. 2. Justin expressly says that these Memoirs were called "Gospels,"* and he twice refers to what he calls "The Gospel," as a source of information respecting Christian facts, and a book whence he quotes.† This much, then, is certain, that Justin had writings which were called Gospels, or, The Gospel, and that these were identical with the Memoirs.‡ But the only books of which we have the

* *οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἐν τοῖς γενομένοις ὑπ' ἀυτῶν ἀπομνημονεύμασιν ἁ καλεῖται ἐυαγγέλια κ.τ.λ.* Apol., i, c. 66.

† Dial. cum Tryphone Judaeo, pp. 156 and 352.

‡ Eichhorn attempts to turn aside the point of this argument by saying that the fathers were wont to call each separate narrative from the life of Christ a Gospel, and in proof of this he cites a passage from Irenæus (iii, 15) in which that father says, "God has wrought so that many Gospels are exhibited by Luke." Hence he infers that these Gospels of Justin were merely collections of narratives from the life of Christ. But this is excessively futile. Even if the quotation from Irenæus proved that the fathers were wont to apply the term Gospel to separate portions of the history of our Lord, (which it does not, for such a passage can prove nothing as to the *common* usage of the fathers,) it would not serve Eichhorn's purpose. Had Justin said that his Memoirs *contained* Gospels, the expression might have received illustration from such a passage as that of Irenæus. But when he says that they were *called* Gospels, he plainly means that this was another (and, it may be presumed, the common) designation of the *books* which he entitles Memoirs. Even Eichhorn himself is obliged to admit that

least intimation as having ever been called Gospels, or The Gospel, by the early Christians, are the canonical Gospels; from which it follows, with no slight probability, that it is to them that Justin refers in the passages cited. 3. Had the Memoirs quoted by Justin been different from the canonical Gospels, it is unaccountable that, of all subsequent writers, many of whom refer to Justin's works, and most of whom must have been familiar with them, not one should make the most distant reference to such a noticeable fact, not even when professedly investigating the subject of the canon! For this silence there is no way of accounting, but on the supposition that it was well known that the Memoirs were only the Gospels under another name. 4. Justin makes numerous quotations from these Memoirs, and these are found, to a large extent, to harmonize with passages in the canonical Gospels. This seems to place the identity of the two beyond any doubt. Among scholars such a fact has always been held of great weight in determining such questions;* and with reason, for the chances that

Justin must have intended a *collection* of narratives, ("eine Sammlung von Erzählungen,") which is virtually conceding the whole question. Bishop Marsh gets rid of the argument by the compendious expedient of supposing that the words "are interpolated."

* A remarkable instance has been furnished of late to the literary world, in the case of the Treatise on Heresies, recently discovered, and by its editor, M. Miller, issued as a work by Origen. This has now, to the satisfaction of all scholars, been identified with a long-lost work of Hippolytus, Bishop of Portus Romanus, under the above title, by the learning and ingenuity of Chevalier

the same passages should be found in different books is so immeasurably small, that such a thing may be regarded as impossible. Since Justin, then, repeatedly adduces as quotations from his Memoirs of the Apostles, passages which are to be found in the canonical Gospels, it would be indulging an unwarrantable degree of incredulity to doubt that he had these very Gospels before him when he made the quotations. It may be added that, besides passages which he formally announces as quoted from the Memoirs, there are many scattered through his writings, the sources of which he does not indicate, but which are found to correspond with passages extant in the Gospels. The fair presumption is, that he quoted these also from the latter.

Eichhorn and his follower, the late Bishop Marsh,* have endeavoured to destroy the force of Justin's testimony by various considerations. In the first place, they have asked, If Justin possessed the four Gospels, why should he have called them "Memoirs, composed by Apostles and those that followed with them," instead of *naming* their authors. But, in adducing this objection, it seems to be for-

Bunsen and Dr. Wordsworth. The evidence they have principally relied on is the existence in the discovered MS. of pages quoted by Photius and others from the work of Hippolytus. On the same grounds, also, did Cardinal Mai identify the MS. he discovered in the Ambrosian library at Milan with the long-lost Treatise of Cicero de Republica.

* Eichhorn, Einleit. Bd. i, s. 102. Marsh, Illustration of the Hypothesis proposed in the Dissertation on the origin of our three first canonical Gospels, Appendix, sect. iii.

gotten that the peculiar character of Justin's writings was such as to render it not only natural, but in a sense necessary, that he should describe the Gospels as he has done. In addressing a heathen emperor, or writing for the conviction of Jews, how could he more appropriately describe the Gospels than by calling them "Memoirs of Christ composed by his Apostles and those who followed with them?" Would it not have been absurd to cite Christian books by titles known only among Christians, in addressing those who were entirely without the pale of Christianity, and to whom the Christian literature was entirely unknown? What did Antoninus Pius know of the Gospel according to Matthew, or what could he have understood by such a title, had Justin referred him to it? It must be evident that Justin employed the phraseology he has adopted for the purpose of conveying, in the terms most likely to be understood by those for whom he wrote, a just idea of the kind of writings from which his facts are drawn. Very probably he was led to select the term Memoirs (*ἀπομνημονεύματα*) from this having been the title affixed by Xenophon to his narrative of the Discourses of Socrates—a work with which, doubtless, the emperor, himself not averse from the studies of philosophy, was familiar.

What is here advanced receives ample confirmation from the fact, that the practice of Justin in this respect is that followed by all the ancient apologists.

"It was," says Mr. Norton,* "the course pursued by the fathers generally in their works addressed to unbelievers;—by Justin's disciple, Tatian, who, though he formed a history of Christ out of the four Gospels, does not make mention of them, nor of the evangelists, in his Oration to the Gentiles;—by Athenagoras, who is equally silent about them in his Apology, addressed, in the last quarter of the second century, to Marcus Aurelius;—by Theophilus, who conforms to the common usage of the writers with whom he is to be classed, except that, as before mentioned, he once speaks of 'The Gospels,' and uses once the name 'Gospel,' and once the term 'Evangelic voice,' in citing the Gospels, and once quotes the Evangelist John by name;—by Tertullian, who quotes the Gospels elsewhere so abundantly, but from whose Apology, or from whose work, 'To the Nations,' no information (supposing those works to stand alone) could be gleaned concerning them;—by Minutius Felix, whose single remaining book, a spirited and interesting defence of Christianity and attack on heathenism, in the form of a dialogue, affords, likewise, no evidence that the Gospels were in existence;—by Cyprian, the well-known Bishop of Carthage about the middle of the third century, who, in his defence of Christianity, addressed to Demetrian, a heathen, does not name the Gospels nor the evangelists;—and, to come down to the beginning of the fourth century, by

* Genuineness of the Gospels, vol. i, p. 137.

Arnobius, who, in his long work, 'Against the Gentiles,' does not cite any book of Scripture;—and by Lactantius, who, in his Divine Institutes, does not speak of the Gospels, nor quote by name any one of the evangelists, except John, and mentions him only in a single passage."

It has been further objected that Justin's citations differ considerably from the corresponding passages in the Gospels. But they differ simply from his having sometimes combined two passages from different Gospels into one, or from his having given the substance of the passage rather than the exact words; for both of which practices he has the example of the Apostle Paul in his citations from the Old Testament.* Such modes of dealing with books are common to writers of all ages, and as Justin exhibits the same practice in reference to the Old Testament and to profane writers, it is groundless to urge the trifling discrepancies which exist between his quotations and the received text of the evangelists, as any evidence that it was not from them he quoted.

The most weighty objection that has been adduced is, that Justin frequently cites from his Memoirs passages which are not to be found in any of the Evangelists. This, if it could be substantiated, would unquestionably present a difficulty in the way of our regarding these Memoirs as identical with our Gospels. But I am disposed to question

* See Appendix, Note A.

the *fact* in every instance that has been adduced in support of this assertion. It must be observed, that from the passages alleged with this view, all those must be discounted which do not *expressly* refer to the Memoirs as the source whence they have been taken; for a passage which simply contains some statement concerning our Lord, not to be found in the Evangelists, but which Justin does not say was found in his Memoirs, is obviously irrelevant to the present inquiry. The question now before us is not, Does Justin narrate of our Lord certain things which the evangelists do not narrate? for, on this point, there can be no diversity of opinion: but, Does he quote his Memoirs in such a way as to lead us to believe that they were a different work from the Gospels? Now, nothing is worth a rush as bearing on this question, excepting passages which can be shown by Justin's own words to have been taken by him from his Memoirs. Where this cannot be shown to be the case, it remains open to us to ascribe his additions to traditional accounts, true or false, which had reached his ear; and which, being such, have no relation whatever to the subject now before us. When the deductions shown to be thus necessary are made from the passages alleged, there remains but one which claims even a moment's consideration. It is as follows: "For the devil, as soon as he (Jesus) had come up from the river Jordan, after the voice had said to him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, in the Memoirs of

the Apostles it is written that he came to him and tempted him, &c."* Here it is alleged that Justin quotes from the Memoirs of the Apostles a statement which does not occur in any of the Gospels, viz., that the voice which was heard from heaven addressing our Lord after his baptism, said to him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Now, even if we grant to this objection its full force, as it is put by those who adduce it, to what does it amount? Why, to this, that Justin, quoting from memory, substitutes for what the evangelist actually says, a passage from the Old Testament containing the very same words, with the addition of a few more, and so closely resembling the passage in the Evangelists, that if reference was not made to the text, the mistake might most readily occur. Nay, so natural does this substitution appear to have been, that we find it repeated again and again by writers in whose case it cannot be accounted for as the objector would account for it in the case of Justin. Clement of Alexandria undoubtedly had and used the canonical Gospels; yet Clement gives the words addressed to our Lord after his baptism in the same way as Justin.† So does Methodius, so Lactantius, so Hilary, so Juvencus, all of whom had and used our extant Gospels. This reading has even found its way into one of the critical sources of the Greek text, the Cambridge Codex; it appears

* Dial., c. Tryph., p. 331, B.

† Paedagog., l. i., c. 6, p. 113, ed. Potter.

in several of the Latin codices, and we have the testimony of Augustine, that it was in several copies which he had examined.* The mistake, therefore, was one which, from some cause or other, the early Christian writers were apt to make; and in such circumstances nothing can be more absurd than to attempt to force out of its occurrence in the writings of Justin a proof that the authority to which he appeals was some other narrative of our Lord's life than one of the Gospels. The variation is evidently a mere clerical error, and no more proves that Justin had a Gospel different from the canonical Gospels, than a thousand such variations in the writings of theologians in the present day would prove that even yet the canon is not settled. But even this apparitional support cannot be spared to the advocates of this opinion; for it needs only a glance at the passage cited from Justin, to satisfy us that the only part of his statement to which the authority of his Apostolic Memoirs is pledged, is that which *follows* the words alleged to be addressed to our Lord. Justin does not say that *these words* were taken by him from the Memoirs; what he adduces as "written" there is, that our Lord was tempted of the devil. It is irrelevant, therefore, in a question relating solely to what Justin expressly quotes from his Memoirs, to adduce what he does not advance avowedly on that authority.

I shall conclude what I have to say of Justin

*See Griesbach's Note on Luke iii, 22, or Tischendorf's.

Martyr, as a witness for the canonical Gospels, in the words of the learned, laborious, and cautious Lardner: "Upon the whole," says he, "it must be plain to all that he (Justin) owned and had the highest respect for the four Gospels, written, two of them by apostles, and the other two by companions and followers of the apostles of Jesus Christ—that is, by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."*

Next in order of time to Justin is Irenæus. So full and explicit is his testimony to the existence and universal reception of the canonical Gospels in the Churches of his day, that no writer of any authority has ventured to call the fact in question. He states that the number of Gospels is *four:* he specifically names the writers of them as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and he gives repeated quotations from them, which enable us to identify his Gospels with those now in use.† No doubt, then, can remain that in his day (c. 178) the extant Gospels were acknowledged by the Christians as the only authentic narratives of our Lord's life and sayings.

It is unnecessary to carry this investigation further, else the testimony of Athenagoras, (c. 178,) of Theophilus of Antioch, (c. 190,) and of others, might be adduced. Sufficient, however, has been advanced to show that a clear chain of testimony in the orthodox Churches carries us up to the apostolic age, certifying us that these books were from the

* Works, vol. ii, p. 121. † See Appendix, Note B.

first accepted by the Christians as the genuine productions of the men whose names they bear. This is an important point gained, but it does not constitute the whole strength of our case. Valuable as is the testimony of the Christian fathers on this subject, it is not to that alone that an appeal can be made on this question. It is a remarkable and important fact, that the evidence of the heathen and of the heretical opponents of Christianity is no less explicit in support of the claims of these books. This evidence may be briefly summed up as follows:* 1. These writers attest the existence of the Gospels, at a period so close upon the apostolic age, that a forgery in the name of apostles and apostolic men was impossible. There can be no doubt that Celsus (c. 176) was familiar with our Gospels, and that it is of them he speaks, when he says to the Christians, after criticising the facts of the crucifixion: "All this have we taken from your own writings."† Had he taken them from any other than those accepted by the Christians as genuine, unquestionably his opponent, Origen, by whom all that we have of Celsus has been preserved, would have taken care to set the world right on that point. Tatian (c. 172) composed a history of Christ by putting together into a harmony the accounts of the four evangelists, and called his book *Dietessaron*,

* Comp. Hug, Introd., pp. 31–64; Norton, Genuineness, &c., vol. ii throughout.

† Ap. Origen, cont. Cels., l. ii, c. 74, ed. Spencer, p. 106.

i. e., [The Gospel] by means of the four.* Theodotus the Gnostic (c. 190) quotes repeatedly from Matthew and from Luke, and even in one instance presses the precise expression used by Luke, as unfavourable to the orthodox tenet of the divine nature of Jesus Christ.† Marcion (c. 130) had a Gospel which was undoubtedly that of Luke interpolated and expurgated to suit his own notions. Heracleon (c. 125) had the Gospel of Luke, on parts of which he wrote a commentary, a portion of which is still extant;‡ he seems also to have that of Matthew, and he undoubtedly had that of John, on which he wrote a commentary, fragments of which are still preserved.§ Ptolemy, who was contemporary with Heracleon, repeatedly quotes the Gospels, styling the writer of the fourth Gospel, the Apostle, and engaging to prove, by means of these citations, his peculiar positions, "from the words of the Saviour, which only are an infallible guide to the apprehension of the truth."‖ Valentinus, the master of Heracleon and Ptolemy, had the four

* Eusebius, History Eccl., l. iv, c. 28; Theodoret, Haeret. Fab., l. i, c. 20.

† He says that if the orthodox doctrine of the incarnation were true, the expression (Luke i, 35) would have been *πνεῦμα κυρίου γενήσεται ἐνσοί*, not *ἐπὶ σέ*. The argument is a marvellously futile one, but it serves to show that he had the extant text of Luke before him in the year of grace 190.

‡ In Clement of Alexandria, Strom., l. iv, c. 9, ed. Potter, p. 596.

§ In Origen, Opp. ed. De la Rue, t. xiii, p. 76. See Appendix, Note C.

‖ Epiphanius, Hæres. xxxiii.

Gospels, according to Irenæus and Tertullian,* and he, as well as his school, made large use of them in their writings. Now, when we consider how scanty are the remains of this class of writings, and how readily they were destroyed by the zeal of the orthodox, it cannot but be viewed as surprising that so large an amount of unequivocal testimony should be capable of being collected from them, bearing on the point now in hand. Within these few years, however, a most important addition has been made to this part of the evidence. One of the most eminent of the Gnostic heretics is Basilides, who "appeared as a teacher as early as Hadrian, and probably even under Trajan, and closed his life under Antoninus Pius."† He was a man of learning and ability, and stood at the head of one of the Gnostic sects. Of his writings only a few fragments remain, of which those hitherto known afford us but little information as to the sources whence he drew his acquaintance with Christianity. We have, indeed, the assertion of an ancient author,‡ that Basilides wrote twenty-four books on the Gospel, by which term we must understand the four Gospels taken collectively, for so the fathers were wont to designate them. But any statement of his own, bearing directly on the point before us, has hitherto been a desideratum. By the discovery, however, of the

* Adv. Hæret., l. iii, c. ii, n. 7. De Praescript. Hærat., c. 38.
† Hug, Introd., p. 63.
‡ Agrippa Castor, ap. Euseb. Hist. Eccl., l. iv, c. 7.

long-lost Treatise of Hippolytus on the Refutation of Heresies, this deficiency has been supplied. We now not only know, from his own words, that Basilides possessed the Gospels of Luke and John, both of which he quotes, but "that his whole metaphysical development is an attempt to connect a cosmogonic system with St. John's prologue, and with the person of Christ."* We thus possess a witness to the existence of these Gospels as early as between A. D. 120 and A. D. 130, that is, from ten to twenty years from the death of St. John. This ought to settle the question with all candid inquirers. To suppose that a book, forged in his name so shortly after his death, *could* have acquired such credit as to make it worth the while of an heretical leader to labour to show the accordance with it of his system, is utterly preposterous.

2. But not only do these ancient heretics attest the existence in their day of the Gospels; they also attest the universal and devout acceptance of these by the Christians as of apostolic authority. This is rendered evident by the fact that these heretics never oppose any rival Gospels to those possessed by the orthodox; but, on the contrary, strive by all means to show the accordance of their peculiar opinions with the contents of the canonical Gospels. No reason can be assigned for this, but that they knew that these histories of our Lord were universally acknowledged in the Christian Church as au-

* Bunsen, Hippolytus and his Age, vol. i, p. 87.

thoritative documents of Christian belief. Suppose a man, claiming to be a member of the Church of Scotland, to be accused of heresy, and to endeavour earnestly to rebut that charge by contending that his opinions were in accordance with the Confession of Faith, would not such an appeal presume that by all the members of that Church that symbol was accepted as an accredited standard of belief? If not, how could the accordance of his opinions with it substantiate his claim to be purged of the charge of heresy, as tried by the standards of that Church? The case before us is analogous. The ancient heretics wished to be held genuine members of the Christian Church, notwithstanding their theosophic aberrations from the simplicity of the gospel, and for this purpose they argued from passages, and wrote commentaries on portions or on the whole of the canonical Gospels. Can anything more clearly show that these Gospels were *universally* recognised as the genuine and the proper standards by which Christian orthodoxy could alone be determined? If they were not, the labours of the heretics were as idle as would be the effort of a man who, claiming certain legal rights, should seek to substantiate that claim by an appeal to something which was not acknowledged as part of the law of the realm.

The survey which has thus been made of the direct historical evidence in support of the genuineness of the canonical Gospels, shows us how cogent, how irrefragable is the proof of their being the

productions of the men whose names they bear. Whether we listen to friend or foe, to the orthodox professors of Christianity, or to the heretical opinionists who sought to engraft the dogmas of a mystic philosophy on the religion of Jesus Christ, we shall be alike assured that in these writings we have what, from the time of their composition, were universally received as the only authentic histories of Christ. In this we have the evidence proper to such a question; and we have it in favour of these books to a degree *to which no production of ancient profane literature so much as approximates.*

CHAPTER IV.

IF THE GOSPELS ARE NOT GENUINE, HOW DID THEY ORIGINATE?—HYPOTHESIS OF AN ORIGINAL GOSPEL WHICH HAS BEEN INTERPOLATED.

After the preceding investigation, it is probably superfluous to dwell longer on this part of the subject. Before leaving it, however, it may be worth while to look at two of the most celebrated hypotheses which have of late years been proposed, in order to account for the existence of such writings as the four Gospels, on the assumption that they are not genuine.

Of these hypotheses, the first is that originally proposed by Eichhorn, and substantially adopted in

this country by the late Bishop Marsh.* According to this, it is supposed that an account of the life of Christ was drawn up by some competent authority at an early period in the history of the Church—that this constituted the original Gospel (*Ur-evangelium*)—that in process of time this came to be variously altered and extended—that in this way many Gospels or narratives of the history of Christ came to be in circulation in the Church, and that, some time in the latter half of the second century, the Church selected from the mass of these the four now extant, and accredited them as the only orthodox Gospels. They thus came into their present prescriptive rights, while all the rest gradually passed into oblivion.

It forms no part of my present object to discuss the once much-vexed question of an original Gospel. Not only is the assumption of such a document a purely gratuitous fiction, for which not a shadow of historical evidence can be furnished, but it has been proved to superfluity, by several able writers, that such an assumption can in no way be construed in accordance with the actual phenomena of the Gospels themselves.† I shall content myself with en-

* Eichhorn and Marsh restrict their hypothesis to the first three Gospels, accepting that of John as genuine; but others who have adopted the hypothesis, refuse this restriction, and extend it to all the four.

† Cf. Veysie, Examination of Mr. Marsh's hypothesis respecting the origin of our first three canonical Gospels; Hug. Introduction, p. 356; Bishop Thirlwall's Introduction to his translation of Schleiermacher's Critical Essay on the Gospel of St. Luke; Davidson's Introduction to the New Testament, vol. i, p. 384.

deavouring to show, that the supposition that the canonical Gospels were produced by a gradual process of accretion and alteration is irreconcilable with certain undoubted facts.

1. Of these I mention, first, the undoubted fact of their universal reception by the Christians of the second century. This Eichhorn fully admits, but accounts for it by the supposition that the Church stepped in authoritatively to settle the competing claims of the various Gospels, by setting her imprimatur on these. "It is evident," says he, "that toward the end of the second, and in the beginning of the third century, the Church wrought hard to bring into general respect these four Gospels, which had been already, if not wholly, yet for the most part, extant in their present form, and to effect their general reception, to the suppression of other Gospel works which were in circulation."*

Let us beware that we be not imposed upon by specious combinations of high-sounding words in such a question. Eichhorn says that the *Church* determined for the Christians what Gospels they should accept; let us inquire what we are to understand by the word "Church" in such a connexion.

Now, the only reply that *can* be given to this is, that by the Church is meant the whole body of orthodox Christians in the world at that time. It is not pretended that a decree of any council of bishops, or of any one claiming to be chief bishop of

* Einleit, i. 157, 2te ausg.

the Catholic Church, was uttered in the second century for the purpose of settling the canon of the New Testament. The only meaning, therefore, which can be attached to Eichhorn's words is, that by the Church he means the whole body of Christians in the world at that time. The supposition, then, is, that about the end of the second century, all the Christians in the world, either individually or by their representatives, came to an agreement to select, out of many narratives of our Lord's life then in their possession, the four which we now possess. Now, what evidence is there that such a thing ever took place? Is there any record of it?—any hint, of the most distant kind, in any ecclesiastical writers, that such a convention ever met, or ever attempted to meet? There is not. Further, from what we know of the condition of the Christians in that age, is their meeting in such a way, for such a purpose, at all credible? Up to the close of the second century, the Churches existed as separate communities; they had no organization for simultaneous action; their leaders are not known to have met in council till the council at Nice, in the middle of the fourth century; they were kept apart by distance of locality, differences of language, and, in many instances, by differences of sentiment; and, to crown all, they were kept in perpetual anxiety and unsettledness by the harassing assaults of their persecutors. Is it in the nature of things credible, that under these circumstances

they should, by *unanimous consent*, have come together, or by any process agreed to select four books, not apparently more generally diffused or of greater reputation than the rest, and to have conferred upon them such authority, that from that time forward all others disappeared from common use, the license of transcribers was forever restrained, and these now sacred four, though owing their existing form to tradition, fiction, and the ignorance or ingenuity of copyists, became thenceforward a treasure, over which the whole Church watched with jealous care, which no transcriber ever afterward violated, and no heretic presumed to assail? The common sense of mankind will, I think, universally pronounce this *impossible*. But there are other difficulties which lie in the way of this supposition not less formidable. Had such a decision of the whole Church, as Eichhorn supposes, been deliberately come to, it must have been upon the ground that these four Gospels are the entire and genuine productions of the men whose names they bear. On no other ground could the assembled Christians have justified their preference, and on no other could the concurrence of all the Christians throughout the world have been secured. Now, in this case there are only three suppositions possible; either they knew this ground to be true; or not knowing it to be true, they yet believed it to be so; or knowing it to be not true, they pretended to believe it. The only one of these

propositions tenable is the *first;* the *second* is physically impossible, and the *third* is morally absurd, unless we believe all the Christians of the second century to have been knaves. But Eichhorn and his followers, by repudiating the only tenable supposition of the three, must select between the physical impossibility and the moral absurdity for that which they will embrace.

2. A second fact, which is irreconcilable with the hypothesis that our canonical Gospels were got up in the way Eichhorn suggests, is, that before the end of the second century, copies of them were in *general use* among the Christians in all parts of the world. For this the evidence is abundant, and the fact is not denied by our opponents. Well, this assertion means two things; it means that MSS. of the four Gospels existed at the date mentioned, in numbers proportionate to the number of Christians at that time in the world, else these Gospels could not have been in *general* use among them; and it means that all these MSS. substantially agree with each other, else they could not have been copies of our four Gospels. Now, with this fact the impugners of the integrity of the Gospel are bound to deal, and it is one which I think they will hardly be able to make succumb to their hypothesis. By a carefully conducted investigation, Mr. Norton has shown* that the number of copies of the Gospels extant at the period referred to, (allowing one copy to every fifty Christians,) can-

* Vol. i, p. 31, ff.

not be estimated at less than sixty thousand. How, we may ask, is the accordance of all these copies of the Gospels to be accounted for, except on the supposition that they were all honestly transcribed from some common archetype? Was that archetype, then, an authorized copy prepared by Eichhorn's supposed "Church," convened for the purpose? This is impossible: in those days of manuscript literature and tardy communication, it must have taken a long time to disseminate the Gospels over the whole civilized world, and to furnish so many copies of them—a time carrying us back far beyond the middle of the second century. It follows, then, that antecedent to that date, there existed an authentic exemplar of these Gospels, from which all the rest were transcribed. These Gospels, therefore, are not the compilations of mere collectors of traditions, nor have they been disfigured by the wilful interpolations and alterations of transcribers.

3. The last fact to which I shall refer, as incompatible with the hypothesis of Eichhorn, is, the agreement of the extant codices or manuscripts and ancient versions of the Gospels. "There have been examined," says Mr. Norton,* "in a greater or less degree, about six hundred and seventy MSS. of the whole or of portions of the Greek texts of the Gospels. These were written in different countries and at different periods, probably from the fifth century downward. They have been found in

* Vol. i, pp. 19, 20.

places widely remote from each other,—in Asia, in Africa, and from one extremity of Europe to the other."

To these we have to add the numerous MSS. extant of *versions* of the Gospels in different languages of these three great divisions of the world; of writings of the Christian fathers, abounding in quotations from the Gospels; and of ancient commentaries upon the Gospels, in which the text is cited. Now here is a huge body of testimony, and it is impossible but that the truth should be elicited, if this be properly dealt with. If all these witnesses substantially agree in their depositions, the fact alleged cannot but be true. Should here and there a witness, through accident or infirmity, or even unworthy design, differ from the rest, this cannot be held as at all invalidating the worth of their substantial agreement; nay, it is only upon the assumption of that substantial agreement being admitted that these instances acquire their peculiarity and noticeableness. Assuming the truth of what the witnesses are adduced to prove, such incidental discrepancies can be easily accounted for; but there is no possibility of accounting for the substantial agreement of this multitude of witnesses, if the truth of what they are adduced to prove be denied.

How stands the case, then, with this immense body of witnesses for the integrity of the Gospels? The answer is, that their testimony is *uniform* in

favour of that integrity, with only a few slight variations,

> "quas aut incuria fudit,
> Aut humana parum cavit natura."[9]

In other words, there is among all these MSS. a substantial agreement in what they furnish as the text of the Gospels; and consequently, as the only way of accounting for such agreement is their having all been copied, more or less remotely, from one archetype, it follows that in them we have substantially a *faithful transcript* of the original MSS. Were it otherwise,—had, for instance, the course been followed which Eichhorn suggests, and had one transcriber here, and another there, altered, interpolated, or mutilated the text of his MS., as caprice, or taste, or opinion dictated; had one man inserted all the floating narratives concerning Christ which were circulating in the district in which he lived, and another, and a third done the same with those prevalent in his; had every Church that possessed a MS. history of our Lord appended to it each new fact of his life that was transmitted to them from whatever source; and had every heresiarch who had some favourite dogmata which he wished to surround with the authority of the great Author of Christianity, incorporated these with some professed discourse of our Lord, what would have been the consequence? Would it, in the nature of

[9] "Which common frailty leaves or want of care."
Creech, Trans. of Horace's Art of Poetry.

things, have been possible that such an agreement as we find in the text of the MSS. of the Gospels now extant would have existed? Would there even in that case have been such a thing as a generally received text of the Gospels? Would not every MS., or at least every family of MSS., have presented us with a distinct narrative, a separate and independent compilation, so that instead of four Gospels, we should, perhaps, have had four hundred?

To place ourselves in a proper position for judging in this matter, we must divest our minds of all the notions with which modern usages may have filled them, as to the issuing of books. It is easy *now* to diffuse, very widely, an interpolated edition of a work, because the art of printing enables us to make every edition of a work consist of as many copies as we please. One might thus interpolate thousands of copies of a book at once, and by cheapness of sale, or beauty of execution, might drive other and purer editions of the work out of the market. But in the days of MS. publication, such a thing was impossible. A transcriber could interpolate or disfigure but *one* copy at a time. He could have no influence upon other copies executed by his contemporaries. His interpolated copy would have no more effect upon the copies of his own age, than one copy of a book printed on mildewed paper would have on the edition of which it formed a part. There would be one bad copy, and that would be all. Had,

therefore, interpolation and spontaneous addition been the practice of the early transcribers of the Gospels, such an agreement in the MSS. now extant, as we find to exist, would have been an utter impossibility.

These facts seem sufficient to set aside the hypothesis of Eichhorn, and to vindicate the integrity of the Gospels. This conclusion, however, is capable of receiving corroboration from various considerations, which it may be worth while briefly to state. And, in the *first* place, the supposition that in the early ages of Christianity the sacred books of the Christians were liable to be extensively corrupted by them, attributes to them, without reason or evidence, a propensity the very reverse of that exhibited by all the rest of mankind under similar circumstances; it assumes, that while all other religionists, heathens as well as Jews, watched over their sacred books with the most jealous care, the Christians left theirs to be the prey of every careless copyist, or every meddling compiler.* *Secondly.* This is affirmed not only without evidence, but in the face of all the evidence we possess as to the feelings and habits of the early Christians, in refer-

* The practice of the Jews in this particular is well known. For that of the Greeks, the reader is referred to the testimony of Herodotus, *Hist.* v, 90, and vi, 57; and for that of the Romans, to Livy, Book iv, 8; ix, 18; to the Note of Servius on Virgil, *Aen.* vi, 72; and to Niebuhr's Rom. Geschichte, vol. i, p. 526. It is well known, also, with what care the sacred books of the Hindoos are kept by the Brahmins.

ence to their sacred books; the evidence being abundant that they watched, with the most reverential solicitude, over the integrity and safety of whatever was handed down to them as of apostolic origin, and viewed as a heinous crime all attempts at alterations of the sacred text, whether of the Old Testament or the New.* *Thirdly.* About the end of the second century, we find the Christians charging upon certain heretics the offence of having corrupted and mutilated the Gospels, and other New Testament books. With what propriety could this have been done, or how could the Christians have saved themselves from an overwhelming retort, had these Gospels been themselves the mass of systematic and acknowledged corruptions, which Eichhorn's hypothesis supposes? *Fourthly.* At the end of the second century, and the beginning of the third, there flourished a Christian writer whose attention was much directed to sacred criticism, who

* See the testimony of Papias ap. Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.*, iii, 39; Justin Mart. *Dial. cum Trypho.*, p. 361, ed. Thirl.; *Apol.*, i, p. 54, p. 97; Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, (A. D. 170,) ap. Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* iv, 23; Irenæus *Cont. Haer.* iii, 1, p. 173, ed. Massuet. iii, 11, § 8, p. 190, i, 8, § 1, p. 37, ii, 28, § 2, p. 156; Clemens Alex. *Strom.* vii, § 16, p. 894, ed. Potter; *Paed.* iii, 12, p. 309; *Strom.* iii, § 13, p. 553; Tertullian *Adv. Marcion.* iv, § 5, *De Praescr. Haer.* § 38, &c. Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho, says, very pointedly, "to mutilate the sacred Scriptures would be a more fearful crime than the worship of the golden calf, or than the sacrifice of children to demons, or than slaying the prophets themselves." *Dial cum Trypho.*, p. 296. Strong language like this shows how abhorrent were the Christians of the second century from the practice which Eichhorn charges on them.

was a studious collater of MSS., who especially examined those extant of the four Gospels, who has noticed, sometimes with strong censure of the carelessness of the transcribers, the various readings these MSS. presented, and who wrote commentaries on the four Gospels. This writer was Origen. Now, had the MSS. of the Gospels in his day (and he must have had access to Christian writings not of the second century only, but also of the first) differed as widely from each other as they *must* have differed, had such a process been going on as that which Eichhorn supposes, it is not possible but that Origen should have perceived their manifold discrepancies, and, perceiving them, have animadverted upon them. In his commentaries on the Gospels, however, we find that while he enumerates some fifteen or sixteen various readings, they are all of such a kind as still abound in the MSS. of the New Testament; they are all of them mere unimportant variations, such as *ἡμέρᾳ* for *ὥρᾳ*, Matt. xviii, 1, *ἔσται* for *ἔστι*, Luke ix, 48, &c., and are most of them still to be found in the extant codices. From this the conclusion is irresistible, that in Origen's day "the manuscripts of the Gospels did not, to say the least, differ more from each other than those which we now possess;" and consequently no such process of mutilation and interpolation as Eichhorn supposes, *could* have taken place in the age preceding his. *Fifthly.* All ancient writers who have noticed the Gospels, are not only silent as to any

manifest discrepancies between the MSS., but the notices they furnish indicate that none such existed. *Sixthly.* Had the Gospels been interpolated, the unity of their style and form would have been destroyed, and a diversity of hand would have been clearly indicated by a diversity of manner, which is not the case. *Seventhly.* This latter consideration is strongly confirmed by the fact that the Gospels were transcribed by native Greeks,* persons entirely ignorant of the Hebrew language, and, consequently, persons who would write anything they had themselves to add, in the common dialect, and not in the Hellenistic. But the language of the Gospels is throughout Hellenistic, and, consequently, these must have proceeded, entirely as they now are, from the Hebrew-Christian authors of them anterior to transcription. *Eighthly.* Spurious additions to genuine writings, or works entirely spurious, always betray their origin by some incongruity with the character or the circumstances of the pretended author, or of the age to which they are assigned; whereas no such incongruities are exhibited by the Gospels. And, *lastly.* The consistency preserved throughout each of the Gospels, in all that relates to the actions, discourses, and most extraordinary character of Christ, shows that each is a work which remains essentially the same as it

* Origen says expressly, *ὑπὸ Ἑλλήνων συνεχῶς γραφόμενα τὰ εὐαγγέλια μη εἰδότων τὸν διάλεκτον.* Comment. in Matt. xvi, 19, Opp. iii, 748.

was originally written, uncorrupted by subsequent alterations or additions.

The opponents of the integrity of the Gospels are fond of appealing to certain statements found in some of the early writers, by which they think their cause is sustained. Those adduced by Eichhorn are all that have been produced for this purpose, and one cannot but marvel how any person accustomed to weigh historical evidence could for a moment be induced to regard them as of the least weight in support of Eichhorn's hypothesis. The first is the testimony of Dionysius of Corinth, preserved by Eusebius, in which, after inveighing against certain "apostles of the devil," as he calls them, who had corrupted some epistles of his, he adds, "Against such a woe is denounced. It is not wonderful, therefore, that some have taken it upon them to corrupt the Scriptures of the Lord, since they have corrupted those which are not such."* From this Eichhorn would have us to infer that in the time of Dionysius the corrupting of the sacred writings was a common usage among the Christians. At this rate, we must hold the good bishop as witnessing that the Christians of the second century were for the most part "apostles of the devil," and men deserving "woe!" Who does not see that, while his testimony establishes the fact that some did use undue liberties with the sacred writings, this, so far from being a common practice, was re-

* Hist. Eccles., iv, 23.

garded with horror by the Christians of his day? The next passage is from Origen. After referring to the existence of different readings of Matt. xix, 19, he says, "Now, clearly a great variety in the copies has arisen, whether from the carelessness of some writers, or from the rashness of others, and the bad correction of what has been written, or from their adding or taking away, in the correcting, as seemed fit to themselves."* Now, in the enumeration here given by Origen of the sources of various readings in the MSS. of his day, it so happens that he omits to mention the very one, the existence and operation of which Eichhorn adduces his words to prove—viz., *intentional alterations and interpolations* on the part of transcribers or compilers. He complains of carelessness, rashness, unskilful or arbitrary correction of clerical mistakes, but not one word of designed alteration in the *substance* of the narrative. His words, therefore, prove nothing but what without his testimony we could very readily have believed, viz., that the copyists of the first and second century were not more exempt from human infirmities, and consequent liability to fall into errors, than their brethren of the eleventh or the fourteenth. The third witness summoned is the heathen Celsus, and his testimony Eichhorn dresses up in the following fashion:—"In the second century, this practice [of making additions to the Gospels from generation to generation]

* Comment. in Matt., Opp. iii, 671.

was so generally known, that it came to the knowledge of men who did not belong to the Christians, and Celsus reproaches them with having, like fools, changed their Gospel three, four times, and oftener."* The learned German seems to have been ambitious of imitating the "folly" which he makes Celsus charge upon the early Christians, else he would hardly have called the attention of his readers to a passage so directly militating against himself as the one he has cited. The whole passage, as given by Origen, with his reply, runs as follows:—"Afterward, he (*i. e.*, Celsus) says that some of the faithful, as if through drunkenness, have brought themselves to alter the Gospel from the original writing, three, four times, and oftener, and transform it, so as that they might have the means of denying what is alleged against them. Now, I know of none who have altered the Gospel, except the followers of Marcion, of Valentinus, and I think also of Lucan; nor is this crime to be charged against the word, [*i. e.*, Christianity,] but against those who have dared to corrupt the Gospels. And as the false sentiments of the sophists, the epicureans, the peripatetics, or any others who have erred, is no crime against philosophy, neither is it a reproach to genuine Christianity, that some corrupt the Gospels and introduce sects foreign to the doctrine of Jesus."† Having placed the whole passage, as well as Eichhorn's

* Einleit, in d. N. T., i, p. 704, 2d ed.
† Contr. Cels., ii, p. 77, ed. Spencer.

version, before my readers, I have now to request their attention to the following remarks:—1. It appears that the sole evidence which Eichhorn can adduce of a "*general* acquaintance" with the alleged conduct of the Christians in mutilating their sacred books, and of this being known to "*men* who were not Christians," is a charge brought against them by *one man*, and that exclusively on his own personal authority. 2. This charge which Eichhorn says Celsus brought against the Christians as a body, Celsus expressly limits to *some* (τινὰς) of them, thereby virtually exculpating the mass; for, as Mr. Norton justly remarks, "it is of the nature of such a charge, when brought against some of any community, to exculpate the community in general." 3. Those thus chargeable, it turns out, from Origen's reply, were not genuine believers, but men whom genuine believers repudiated as heretics. 4. The charge of corrupting the Gospels, Origen treats as a *reproach* of the nature of a criminal indictment (ἔγκλημα) against the Christians, in which light he never could have pretended to regard it, had it been "generally known" that the Christians were in the habit of doing so. 5. Celsus says, that the parties of whom he speaks had acted "like drunken men," a comparison the justness of which Origen does not dispute, nor, we suppose, will any dispute who considers how silly and ruinous to their own cause such conduct as Celsus imputes to them would have been. It follows that

Eichhorn would have us to believe that, in the second century, the Christians (as was generally known) were apt to act no better or more wisely than if they had been drunken men! If the mutilation of sacred books justly exposes a man professing to follow these books to such a charge, there are, I fear, certain learned professors whose characters for sobriety are more likely to be jeopardized than those of the Christians of the second century! The last witness whom Eichhorn adduces is Clement of Alexandria, and here too (to pronounce the gentler judgment) he blunders. "Clement," says he, "at the end of the second century, speaks already of corrupters of the Gospels, and ascribes it to them, that, in Matt. v, 10, in place of the words *ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν*, there were found in the MSS. sometimes *ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐσονται τέλειοι*, sometimes *ὅτι ἕξουσι τόπον ὅπου οὐ διωχθήσονται*."* If this were true, it would prove that "corruption of the Gospels" had gone to such a fearful extent in the second century, that not only were passages inserted or omitted, but even the plainest passages were *wantonly altered*, at the caprice of the transcriber. This, which would be too much even for Eichhorn's hypothesis, is happily averted by simply attending to what Clement really says. The reader will find the passage in his Stromata, lib. iv, § 41, (p. 582, ed. Potter,) and on turning to it, he will discover that Clement does not say one word of

* Einleit, i, 705.

either *corrupters* or *copyists*, but limits his remarks exclusively to certain *interpreters* or *scholiasts*, (τινες τῶν μετατιθέντων τὰ εὐαγγέλια,) as, indeed, Eichhorn himself subsequently tells us, the word means.*

I may remark, in conclusion, that Eichhorn, by admitting the genuineness of the fourth Gospel, has laid an axe at the root of his hypothesis as to the origin of the other three. If one of these be genuine, they are all genuine. The Church of the second century placed them all on an equal footing in this respect. But if there was one of them which was known to be genuine, while the others were not known to be so, how can we account for the latter being placed on an equal footing with the former by unanimous consent? Would not those Churches, which had been accustomed for more than half a century to read the fourth Gospel as the undoubted production of St. John, have indignantly repudiated the attempt to place on a par with that a set of anonymous and unauthorized compilations which had arisen they knew not when or how? All their prejudices and all their principles would arm them against such a proposal. We can conceive of no motive that would tempt them to accede to it. Had such a thing been attempted, Christian antiquity would have resounded with vehement protests against it. The silent acquiescence of the

* "Clement Alex., Strom. iv, p. 490, refers to these *scholiasts* under the name τῶν κ. τ. λ."—Einleit. iii, 533.

whole Church in the equal claims of these four Gospels, necessitates the conclusion, that if one is genuine, all are genuine.

CHAPTER V.

THE MYTHIC HYPOTHESIS OF THE ORIGIN OF THE CANONICAL GOSPELS.

The path opened by Eichhorn has been assiduously pursued by many of his countrymen. These men, learned, laborious, but far from sound-minded, prone to set all the probabilities of ordinary experience at naught, and asking little aid from either a comprehensive philosophy or an exact logic, have taken up the notion of a gradual accretion of materials during the post-apostolic age round some nucleus of fact handed down from the age preceding, and have toiled to work it up into a more specious theory of the origin of the Gospels than that which Eichhorn produced. The result has been the Mythic Hypothesis, of which the ablest expounder is Dr. David Frederick Strauss. In his "Life of Jesus Critically examined," this writer has brought together into one result the materials which his countrymen had for half a century before been accumulating, in order to invalidate the pretensions of the Gospel narrative to be taken as genuine history. The prominence which has of late been

given to this hypothesis, and the measure of applause with which it has been welcomed even in this country, render it desirable that in such a discussion as the present, an attempt should be made to test its worth. I believe it to be utterly baseless, and to the highest degree improbable; and this I shall hope to prove so as to leave the same conviction on the minds of all who shall candidly weigh what I have to advance.

I commence by describing the hypothesis itself. According to it, the Biblical narratives are viewed as forming the body of the ancient Jewish and Christian mythology. The subject of ancient mythology has of late years occupied much of the attention of the scholars of Germany, and in the hands of several of them has assumed a scientific form, which has enabled the inquirer into the history of the heroic ages to account for much of the faith and worship of the people, which before appeared incapable of explanation. The theory which has most commended itself is that according to which the myths of the pagan religions are to be viewed purely as fictions, some of which may have been gathered round an actual nucleus of fact, but the most of which are derived from pure invention. For these fictions, however, the people were not indebted to any individuals by whom they were first conceived and published; this supposition is incompatible with the general faith reposed by the people in these stories—a faith which would not

have been yielded to any individual, however elevated his station or commanding his genius. No; certain religious ideas had become diffused through the minds of the people themselves; the community had become habituated to certain forms of thought and feeling of a religious kind; they were thus prepared to receive and credit any story which harmonized with their religious conceptions and emotions; and, consequently, when any one of more vivid imagination than his neighbours succeeded in embodying these in some well-fitting story, it was accepted at once by the community, and retained from that time forward its place in the popular belief. Ottfried Müller, whose work on scientific mythology* is regarded as a standard exposition of this theory of myths, illustrates it by the story of Apollo and Marsyas. Apollo was believed by the Greeks to be the inventor of the lyre, which they were wont to play at his festivals. Marsyas, a deity of Phrygia, was the inventor of the flute, and as the Greeks soon perceived the want of harmony between the sounds of the flute and those of the lyre, the idea rose that Apollo must hate Marsyas. But mere hatred was not enough; Greece must overtop the world, and the gods of Greece vanquish those of all other nations; therefore the belief arose that Apollo must vanquish Marsyas. When this belief was well confirmed, a Greek wandered into Phrygia, and near the castle

* Recently translated into English by Mr. Leitch.

of Celœne, in a cavern whence flowed a stream or torrent, called Marsyas, he found suspended a skin flask, placed there by the Phrygians in honour of Marsyas, who was their Silenus. Immediately on his prepared mind the conception flashes, "Here is the catastrophe of the whole! When Apollo had vanquished Marsyas, he flayed him and made his skin into a bottle, which is here suspended." And so the story arose and gradually got afloat among the people, and became part of their mythology.

Such is the theory of myths which Dr. Strauss adopts and proposes to apply to the history of our Lord, as recorded in the evangelists. Whether this theory be sound or not I cannot stop here to examine. Before proceeding further, however, I would have my readers distinctly to mark, from the illustration above given, and which Dr. Strauss especially commends to our notice, what it is which constitutes a myth. In this story we have a mingling of the real with the ideal. The only part of it which is purely ideal (excepting the original invention of Apollo himself and his rival Marsyas) is the last. The hatred of Apollo to Marsyas, their contest, and the victory of the former, are mere poetical modes of describing certain facts. Those parts of the story admit of—nay, demand—a natural explanation. They are resolvable into certain phenomena of Greek taste and Greek nationality. They mean that the flute and the lyre did not harmonize, that the Greeks liked the lyre better than the flute; and

because the former was *their* instrument, and because *they* liked it better, they assigned it the absolute superiority over the latter. But the story of the flaying is a pure invention; it means nothing; it points to no natural or historical fact; it is a mere fiction suggested by a skin bottle suspended over the River Marsyas to an imaginative Greek, who believed that Apollo hated Marsyas, and vanquished him when they competed for the palm of music. Such is Müller's own selected paradigm of the genesis of a popular myth, which Dr. Strauss has quoted at full length, in order, as he says, to render the subject of mythology "familiar to all theologians." The point which these writers appear to be most anxious to press upon their readers by adducing it is, that to a myth this mingling of the real with the ideal is essential, and, along with that, the fact that myths arise, not from intentional contrivance on the part of any individuals, but unconsciously, as the form in which prevailing ideas and emotions of a religious kind clothe themselves.

Of such stories Dr. Strauss considers the greater part of the life of Christ, as recorded in the evangelists, to consist. He assumes that the minds of the Jews were familiar with the miraculous stories of the Old Testament—that they were filled with the expectation that when the Messiah should come he would excel all who had gone before him in the wonders attendant on his advent and distinguishing his life—that a Jewish rabbi of the name of Jesus

appeared in Judea, and excited much attention by his teaching—nay, produced an overwhelming impression upon those around him by his personal character and discourses, and that during his lifetime the belief arose that he was the Messiah, and though this spread very slowly while he was alive, after his death it rapidly gained numerous adherents, especially as the belief in his resurrection, "however that belief may have arisen," tended prodigiously to confirm it. From all this he argues that a number of wonderful stories would be told concerning Jesus; that people would go on adding to these, especially applying to him the miraculous narratives of the Old Testament; that the ideas which he had inculcated upon his followers would by them be clothed in fables of a narrative cast; that one story would suggest another, and thus in the course of a short time a large body of myths would become clustered around the name and person of Jesus. In the process, moreover, of tradition, these would frequently get mixed and confused, so as to lose sight of the idea they originally embodied, and thus degenerate into mere legends; while it is almost certain that in putting them together into one collection, the authors would introduce some additions of their own, "merely to give clearness, connexion, and climax to the representation." As the early Christians were very anxious to glorify Christ, they gave ready credence to all these productions, and embraced them as actual histories of our Lord's life.

In application of this theory of the composition of the Gospels, Dr. Strauss affirms that between the formation of the first Christian Church and the publication of the Gospels which bear the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, a series of stories concerning the wonderful birth, conduct, doctrines, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, had been formed unconsciously in the imaginations of his followers—that in the course of transmission, these had been in several instances transmuted into mere legends, and that the cycle of fable thus constructed, we have, in a collected form, with certain spontaneous additions in these so-called Gospels, which are the productions of some anonymous writers who, to give them greater reputation, issued them under the name of disciples of Jesus. I proceed to offer what appear to me fatal objections to this position; but, in the outset, I would request my readers to observe how conveniently for himself Dr. Strauss has constructed his theory. He reminds one of the preacher who always took several verses to speak from, assigning as a reason, that when he felt himself straitened in one, he could flee to the next. In like manner, Dr. Strauss has so planned his hypothesis, that when he finds himself unable to make good his position under one phase of it, he has only to shift his ground, and hope for better fortune under another. When he cannot make out any one of the Gospel narratives to be a myth, he can betake himself to the supposition that

it is a legend; and when neither myth nor legend will serve his purpose, he has still in reserve the supposition that it may be an addition of the compiler. If my readers should insist upon knowing on what *principle* the author determines under which of those three heads any narrative is to be classed, the only answer I can give them is, that so far as I have been able to discover, Dr. Strauss's principle is analogous to that of the ancient schoolmaster, who, to abbreviate the processes of geography, was wont to say to his pupils: "Boys, the world may be conveniently divided into three parts,—Great Britain, Europe, and the rest; now, when you want to know where any place is, look first for it in Great Britain; if you cannot find it there, look next for it in Europe; and if you cannot find it in Europe, you may be sure it is in the rest of the world." So says Dr. Strauss: "Try the myth first: if that will not do, try the legend; if that fails, there is the limitless field of spontaneous addition—you will be sure to find room for it there. Anything, in short, rather than believe it." In the remarks which I am about to offer, I shall not trouble my readers by attending curiously to this ingenious device of the author, as the objections I have to offer will, for the most part, apply alike to all the phases of his hypothesis, or be directed more especially against that which is most novel—his assertion that the Gospel narratives are myths.

1. The first observation which I offer upon the hy-

pothesis of Dr. Strauss is, that the formation of such a cycle of myths and legends as he supposes the evangelic history to be, would have been impossible in the space of time which must necessarily be assigned for it. To feel the full force of this objection, it is necessary to keep in mind that the assertion with which we have to deal is, not that the Gospels contain a set of *fables* invented by a few individuals, but that they comprise a series of myths embodying widely-spread ideas, and originated by the plastic hand of popular fancy, and the moulding influence of long-transmitted tradition. A history purely fabulous might have been invented in a very short time; a series of anecdotes might have been easily got up by any one so disposed, within a few weeks after our Lord's death. But that the Gospels had any such origin as this, Dr. Strauss treats as ridiculous. He regards them as a collection of stories which arose slowly, unconsciously, and by a sort of common consent, in the minds of the Christians all over the countries into which they were dispersed, during the first years of the Church. Now this I affirm to have been *impossible* in the time within which such a process must of necessity be confined.

All experience shows that the formation of a mythological system is one of the tardiest processes in which the minds of a people engage. The real myths which we find in Homer and Hesiod had their origin in the long centuries which had elapsed

between the first separation of the Pelasgian race from the common stock and the period which terminates the mythic age of Greece. The myths of India are the slow growth of many centuries; so were those of Egypt; so were those of Scandinavia; and so have all popular mythologies been. It is not conceivable how it could have been otherwise. That which creates itself unconsciously in the mind of a people, comes into form by a necessarily tardy process. An idea must be long brooded over by the mind of a community ere it takes form and substance in the shape of a story. Like the egg of the ostrich, it must undergo a lengthened burial, and be subjected to a high temperature ere the imprisoned life will burst forth, and offer to take wing. And when the question is not of one story, but of a whole cycle of stories, it is manifestly incompatible with any just reason to suppose that this could be the growth of a few decennia, or of less than several ages. The popular mind is not a hot-bed in which growth can be forced. Mythology, like its own phœnix, has a birth only once in the lapse of centuries.

The same thing is true of the effect of tradition in altering or confusing the belief of older times. It is astonishing how slowly a people admit any alteration into their hereditary belief. However apt tradition may be to corrupt the details of a *new* story, it is usually a faithful transmitter of general facts which have been invested with the solemnities of

religion. Hindooism is at this moment substantially what it was centuries before Christ. The myths of Homer are not greatly different from those of Ovid, though nearly a thousand years, and these crowded with events calculated to stir and quicken the popular mind, must have elapsed between the writing of the "Iliad" and the writing of the "Metamorphoses."

All this goes to prove that a series of fabulous narratives, of a mythical and legendary character, so extensive and varied, could not possibly have gathered around the person of Jesus in so short a space of time as must, of necessity, be assigned for this purpose. The time claimed by Dr. Strauss for the formation of the mythic part of these narratives is thirty years, or thereabouts, the period which elapsed between the death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem; the legendary part, he thinks, had time enough to form during the period which elapsed between the destruction of Jerusalem and the composition of the Gospels. This latter event he places in the middle of the second century.

The date thus assumed for the composition of the Gospels has been already abundantly shown to be false; and with that, by Strauss's own showing, his whole hypothesis falls to the ground. If, as he admits, a century and a half is the shortest possible time that can be assigned as having elapsed between the death of Christ and the composition of the Gospels, so as to render his hypothesis credible, the

proof already furnished, that not *one-third* of that time can be assigned to this interval, overthrows his entire theory from the foundation. But even supposing all this line of argument must be relinquished, supposing the authorship of the Gospels enveloped in uncertainty, there is still another point essential to Dr. Strauss's hypothesis, which appears to me surrounded with insuperable difficulty. I refer to his position that the body of myths which forms the basis of the Gospel narratives arose during the thirty years which intervened between the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem. This, as already shown, is assuming for these so-called myths a rapidity of formation such as no other cycle of myths has displayed, and such as seems incompatible with the conditions of mythic existence. Now, on this part of the subject I need not enlarge, for Dr. Strauss fully admits the force of the reasoning. He concedes that the period specified "is much too short to admit of the rise of so rich a collection of mythi." How, then, does he account for their existence within that period? By what appears a very desperate hypothesis—the last resource of one who feels his ground sinking beneath him. "We have shown," says he, "that the greater part of these mythi did not arise during that period, for their first foundations were laid in the legends of the Old Testament, before and after the Babylonish exile; and the transference of these legends, with suitable modifications, to the expected Messiah, was made in

the course of the centuries which elapsed between the exile and the time of Jesus." I have stigmatized this as a desperate resort. It is one to which we may be very sure Dr. Strauss would not have betaken himself had any other presented itself to his mind that seemed at all plausible. For, in the first place, such a supposition is against all analogy. Where can Dr. Strauss point to any mythic cycles in which anything like this is traceable? All the myths of heathenism are conceptions which have risen out of the original impression which some individual, supposed to exist, has produced upon the mind of the community. The case of a people forming a series of myths that related to no actual object, and keeping these *in petto* until some one appeared, around whom they could suitably suspend them, is one which has its existence nowhere but in the imagination of Dr. Strauss. 2dly. How, upon this supposition, does Dr. Strauss account for the fact that the incidental and sometimes obscure notices in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah should have come out into such clear, and definite, and precise conceptions in the recorded actions of Jesus? If we suppose that the former were predictions, and the latter historical fulfilments of these, the fact referred to is fully explained. But, according to Dr. Strauss's theory, this fact appears to me very inexplicable. Is it not marvellous that conceptions which for centuries had been floating vaguely and dimly in the minds of a people should, all at once,

without any apparent cause, assume definite forms, and settle down into historical shape? For centuries the people had been pondering this theme, and yet had got no further than to the entertaining of a few vague anticipations, when all at once a new power descends upon them, and, in the course of thirty years, these dim aspirations after a Messiah start up into a majestic series of legends in which they assume all the precision and firmness of historical narrative! So sudden and miraculous a growth has not been witnessed since Deucalion and his wife renewed the race by casting stones over their shoulders, or since Cadmus sowed his crop of dragon's teeth. Is not the one about as credible as the others?* 3dly. Supposing it proved that among the Jewish followers of Christ the influence of national tradition was sufficient to lead them to invest him with mythic qualities borrowed from the Old Testament, it remains incredible how any such influence could have availed to produce the same result among the Gentile converts. In their minds there was no previous "Messianic idea." All this was absolutely new to them. How, then, did the myths concerning Jesus take exactly the same form

* By-the-by, it is not only in the suddenness of their growth that the myths of the Gospels, as Dr. Strauss represents the narratives of the evangelists, recall to one's mind this old Pelasgic myth of Cadmus and his crop of armed men. There is another point of resemblance in the use Dr. Strauss makes of these so-called myths. He sets them to slay each other, as did the soldiers of Cadmus, and rescues only some four or five of them, exactly after the fashion of the old mythic fable.

and hue with them as they did with the Jews? Here manifestly is, on Dr. Strauss's theory, an effect without a cause; and be it remembered, that the fact here referred to is the *chief fact in the case*, for, at the close of the second century, the number of Jewish converts to Christianity formed but a trifling portion compared with that of those converted from heathenism. At the utmost, therefore, granting all Dr. Strauss here pleads for, his theory accounts only for the least important and least difficult part of the phenomena. 4thly. Dr. Strauss's hypothesis is self-destructive. He assumes that the belief in a miracle-working Messiah was so strong among the Jews that it gave birth to this whole cycle of myths concerning Jesus; and he builds upon this the position that a man of humble descent, in poor circumstances, who did no miracles, and in no way answered to the universal expectation of the Messiah, nevertheless conceived the idea that he was the Messiah, succeeded in persuading others to the same belief, and gathered around him a multitude of followers who perseveringly ascribed to him all that he was not, but what they believed the Messiah was to be! If Dr. Strauss really believes such a thing as this possible, he furnishes, perhaps, the most remarkable instance yet encountered of the truth of Pascal's saying: "Les incredules sont les plus credules." To most other people, I presume, it will be clear to demonstration, that either what he assumes is false, or what he builds on it is absurd. Were it possible

for such a thing to have happened as he here supposes, it would follow that the likeliest way to enjoy the benefit of a popular belief is to contradict that belief in every possible way; that the surest method of persuading a community which is expecting the advent of a deliverer possessing certain criterial qualities, is to appear among them destitute of every one of these qualities, and having many directly opposite; and that the spontaneous birth in the mind of an individual, and of the community, of a sincere belief that he is an expected deliverer, is the natural result of his producing an impression by qualities and conduct the very opposite to those which he and all around him believed that deliverer would exhibit. Am I not justified in asserting that to such a desperate hypothesis Dr. Strauss would not have had recourse, had he not felt that his ground was utterly untenable, and that a violent leap after a shadow was better, after all, than to sink ingloriously among the crumbling fragments of a "baseless fabric."

2. The state of the people among whom this cycle of myths is supposed to have arisen, was such as to render this supposition incredible. A myth is the development of prevailing popular belief or feeling in some suitable story. Wherever it appears, therefore, it bears the impress of the age in which it arose; and it can arise only in an age when imagination is so active that belief can hardly be said to be an act of judgment, when all improbabilities are

readily ascribed to the present agency of Deity, and when (as the best expounder of the Grecian myths in this country has expressed it) "credulity is at its maximum, as well in the narrator himself as in his hearers."* Now, by both of these criteria may the Gospel narratives be shown not to be myths.

These narratives do not embody the prevailing belief and feeling of the people among whom they are supposed to have originated. According to Dr. Strauss, it was in Judea that they chiefly arose. But who needs to be told that the prevailing opinions and aspirations of the Jews, at the time when Jesus appeared among them, find no utterance whatever in these narratives? In which of them is embodied their sullen nationalism? Which of them gives expression to their suppressed but deep hatred of their Roman conquerors? Where shall we find in them any trace of that cherished hope of the people—a Messiah invested with temporal dignity, sitting on the throne of David, and triumphing gloriously over all the enemies of Israel? Had the popular feeling of the Jews clothed itself in myths at the time of Christ's appearance, is it credible that none of these, which were notoriously the predominating, the all-pervading sentiments of the people, should have found development in such myths? And does not the entire absence of such sentiments from the Gospel narratives, except when they are hinted at to be condemned, present a clear proof that whatever

* Grote, Hist. of Greece, vol. i, p. 572.

may have been the source of these narratives, the supposition that they arose spontaneously in the minds of thousands in Judea, as the embodiment of the common feelings and views of the nation, is utterly absurd.

Not less absurd is it to suppose that a whole series of myths could gather round the person of any individual living in such an age of the world as that in which Jesus appeared. Was that an age of all-receiving credulity?—the age of Sadduceeism in Judea; of pyrrhonism in Greece; of universal doubt and scepticism all over the Roman world?—the age of Tacitus, of Juvenal, and of Lucian?—the age of Alexandrine criticism and Antiochean learning?—an age of which Pilate's contemptuous question, "What is truth?" furnishes the genuine and characteristic expression? Is this the sort of age in which myths are rife, and find ready belief? Is this an age the men of which could be persuaded, by any possible influence, into such a state of congenial ecstasy as to dream all at once that one of their own contemporaries had become invested with the attributes of Deity, and had established a religion of infallible truth upon the basis of miraculous evidence? Let not Dr. Strauss say that we are taking him here at a disadvantage—that we are ascribing to the district of Judea a state of things which is true only of the more cultivated parts of the Roman empire. If this be alleged in bar of the objection, I reply that it is irrelevant, and that for two rea-

sons. In the first place, it was *not* in Judea that the religion of Christ found its most numerous adherents, but in Asia Minor, in Greece, in Italy, in Egypt; in short, in the very countries where literature and science had reached their greatest advancement. And, in the second place, let the literary condition of the Jews in the time of Christ be estimated as low as Dr. Strauss pleases, still I maintain that, situated as Judea was in the very centre of Asiatic and Egyptian learning, it is incredible that any such series of legends could have grown up and been propagated there to any extent in such an age. With Alexandria on the one hand, and the cities of Asia Minor on the other, and maintaining with these, the seats of learning, the haunts of science, and the emporia of commerce, a close and frequent intercourse, it is incredible that Judea could have been left in that state of primitive simplicity and credulity, in which alone it is possible for such a series of myths to have arisen in the minds of any considerable portion of her community. Under such circumstances, I do not hesitate to pronounce Dr. Strauss's hypothesis a gross historical impossibility.

3. This hypothesis leaves us without any satisfactory mode of accounting for the origin and early progress of Christianity. The existence of Christianity in our world, as a religion professed by myriads for the last eighteen hundred years, is an undeniable fact: how is it to be accounted for?

How did this religion arise? Whence did it spring? If we take the Gospels as containing true historical narratives, the answer to these questions is easy. Christianity had its rise in the teaching, the miracles, the sacrificial death, the resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. It is a religion resting upon facts of a supernatural kind, which at once prove its divine origin and constitute its unalterable basis. But if the narratives in the Gospels be rejected as myths, it follows not only that no record is extant of the origin of a religious movement which, shortly after its commencement, had spread over the most enlightened countries in the world, and which has, beyond all question, been the mightiest agent in moulding the human character that has ever yet appeared; not only is the source of this mighty power veiled in obscurity, so that no man can write the history of its rise, but in addition to this, we are forced upon conclusions which go to land us in the absurdity of making Christianity the parent of itself. For, let us ask Dr. Strauss and his followers, Which came first? the religion or the myths? Their reply, I suppose, would be, that the religion came first, and gave rise to the myths; but if so, I ask, What gave rise to the religion? It was not surely autochthonous. It certainly had an author—was that author Jesus? If so, how came his followers, already in possession of a theological system taught by him, to think of inventing all those myths concerning him? They must have received

his doctrines at first either upon the ground of their speculative truth, or on the ground of his divine authority. If the former, they must have felt that these doctrines were true in themselves, apart from any pretensions on the part of the teacher to supernatural intelligence, and consequently would never have thought of inventing miracles for the purpose of investing them with greater weight. If the latter, then what was there in Jesus which secured for him the authority upon which his doctrines were received by multitudes who never saw him, and after his death by multitudes who had hated and despised him while alive? Dr. Strauss's answer is, that the belief in Christ's resurrection, "however that may have arisen," especially conduced to this result. But it will not do for Dr. Strauss to take refuge in such a vague generality as that. He is bound, on his hypothesis, to show *how* this belief in Christ's resurrection arose in the early Church. That Christ really did rise, he, of course, regards as a myth. Here, then, it appears, is a myth which not only gave origin to all the rest, but seems to have given origin to itself! There are but three suppositions possible here:—1. That Christ actually did rise from the dead; 2. That the assertion of his having risen was an imposition practised by the apostles upon the multitude; or, 3. That this belief got up in the minds of his followers and won for him more followers, in all of whose minds the same belief arose spontaneously, though hundreds of them

had never heard of a resurrection before. Between these two latter suppositions, Dr. Strauss hovers uneasily, in his remarks upon the resurrection, as if uncertain which to prefer. We may make him welcome to either. If he take the former, he must give up his theory of myths, and fall back upon the old infidel notion of deceptions. If he take the latter, he retains his myths, but burdened with an absurdity of which no sane man will envy him the stewardship.

It may be further observed here, that on the supposition that the religion of Christ gave rise to the so-called myths of the Gospels, we might naturally expect, the further we recede toward the apostolic age, to find the religion of the Christians becoming less and less historical, and more and more doctrinal;—less conversant with the alleged facts of Christianity, and more occupied with its principles. But, in point of fact, as every one knows, the very opposite of this is the case. The more nearly we approach the age of the apostles, the more do we find the believers dwelling amid the feelings and hopes inspired by the character, person, and works of Christ—by those very things which Dr. Strauss says are mere myths; nor is it till we come down for some centuries, to a time when philosophy, disputation, and heresy had tempted or forced men into the construction of dogmata, that we perceive the principles of the Christian faith holding a place of superior interest in the minds of the believers

over the facts on which that faith is founded. On the evangelical hypothesis, all this admits of easy and natural explanation, but what explanation can be given of it on the hypothesis that the narrations of the Gospel are myths, springing out of the general diffusion of Christianity as a religion of principles, I cannot conceive.

From these remarks it follows that the supposition that these so-called myths arose out of the propagation of the religion of Jesus is untenable. There remains but the supposition that the religion arose out of the myths—a supposition which Dr. Strauss would at once, I conclude, reject, as opposed alike to analogy, and to the whole tenor of his own system. What remains, then, but to conclude, on Dr. Strauss's hypothesis, that Christianity arose somehow, and that however it may have arisen, it rapidly spread, but that its true origin is veiled in mystery, —the only supposition consistent with the mythic hypothesis being that it begot itself?

4. Dr. Strauss's theory that the events recorded in the Gospels connected with our Lord's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, are mere myths, is utterly incompatible with the prominence assigned to these events in the preaching and institutions of the apostolic age. Of nothing concerning that age are we more sure than of the fact that to publish the narrative of these events was the great object of the preaching of the apostles, and that the commemoration of these events was the end of some, at least,

of the few ceremonial institutions which they enjoined upon the believers. Who does not know, for instance, that to preach "Christ and him crucified" among men, was the grand object to which Paul devoted his life? or who needs to be told that wherever this devoted man delivered his message, the themes on which he chiefly dilated were the death and resurrection of Jesus? We have the unimpeachable evidence of Luke, in the Acts, to the fact that this was what he preached at Athens, and we have his own authority for saying that it was this which he declared, first of all, at Corinth. Now, when he preached to men of the death and resurrection of Christ, what did he announce? Did he do nothing more than affirm the naked fact that his Master had died by violence, and add to this that a belief had got up among his followers, no one knew how, that he had arisen from the dead, and was gone up to heaven? No one can suppose this; for by such a meager and supposititious tale as this, nothing but derision and contempt was to be gained by one who attempted to found on it a new religion. We *must* suppose that when Paul preached Christ's death and resurrection, he preached these under the same aspect under which the evangelists present them—*i. e.*, a supernatural and miraculous aspect, and in connexion with those great spiritual results to man, which the apostle himself, in several of his undisputed writings, has ascribed to them; in other words, he preached these events in that form and

guise which Dr. Strauss stigmatizes as mythical. Now, either these events really did occur as Paul thus preached them, or they did not. If they did not, how came Paul to say they did? Had the myth by this time been formed, and did Paul believe it? And was he so simple and so ignorant of mankind as to carry a new-formed myth, like this, among the philosophers of Athens, and the free-thinking traders of Corinth, who had long before learned to laugh at their own myths, venerable as these were from their antiquity and the patriotic associations with which they were linked? No sane man can suppose this. Did Paul, then, knowingly go about the world preaching a fable? Such is the only supposition remaining, if we reject the historical truth of the Gospel narratives. But it is a supposition so contrary to all the laws which regulate human action, that no sound-minded reasoner will resort to it for a moment; and it is one which Dr. Strauss himself repudiates. What, then, remains, but the other side of the alternative—viz., that these events, as preached by Paul, truly happened, as he affirmed they did? in which case Dr. Strauss's hypothesis of myths falls to the ground.

I have spoken of these events of our Lord's personal history, narrated in the evangelists, as having been embodied in commemorative institutions. I allude, of course, to the Christian Sabbath and the Lord's Supper—the former commemorative of the resurrection, the latter of the death of Christ. Now,

these institutions are as old as Christianity itself; we read of the one as early as we do of the other; they never seem to have existed without each other. All, then, we need ask here is, do men appoint institutions to commemorate an event which, at the time they are appointed, is not believed to have happened? The answer to this must be in the negative; for, though men may commemorate a fictitious event, *believing it to have really occurred*, it is manifestly absurd to suppose that they will agree to commemorate by a solemn rite what they do not believe to have taken place. Were, then, the death of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ, events so firmly believed by the Christians from the beginning of Christianity, that they agreed to commemorate them by solemn institutes, devoted to that special end? If so, it follows that these events cannot be mythic even on Dr. Strauss's own showing; for a myth, according to him, arises in the minds of a community only as the tardy result of *long* familiarity with certain ideas which it is designed to embody or express. It is, besides, preposterous to suppose that, from the very beginning of Christianity, such firm faith in the resurrection of Christ *could* have pervaded the community of his followers, or such mysterious importance come to be attached by them to his death as is manifested by the existence of these ordinances, had it not been that both were *known* to be facts, and that the latter was recognised in all its supernatural importance.

5. The supposition that the Gospel narratives are myths, is utterly irreconcilable with the known characters and conduct of the early disciples. It is indisputable that many of them were persons of the greatest intelligence—that many were persons of property and cultivation—that all of them were persons of the utmost sincerity, as was proved by the privations to which they submitted, and the persecutions they braved, from their attachment to the cause of Christ. Now, all these persons heartily believed the Gospel history. It was not some speculative system of religious belief which they embraced, and suffered for; it was Christ, in his person, his character, and his work—Christ humbling himself to become man—Christ dying for man—Christ rising and reigning, and interceding in heaven for man; it was this which filled the thoughts and inspired the hearts of the early believers. What they then relinquished their old faith for, what they placed before them as the most excellent of all knowledge, what they were willing to suffer and die for, were exactly those parts of Christianity which Dr. Strauss says are mere myths. Is this credible? Is it possible? Is it usual for men to show such deep devotion to mythic religions? Would any Greek have given up old opinions, and forsaken friends, and property, and prospects, as Paul did, for the sake of embracing, at the risk of all that man holds dear on earth, some new version of the flaying of Marsyas by Apollo, or the tossing

of Vulcan out of Olympus? On the hypothesis of Dr. Strauss, the conduct of such men as Paul and Stephen is utterly unaccountable. Almost, we might say altogether, cotemporary with our Lord, they could not but know that his miracles, and death and resurrection, and ascension were mere fables if they were not actual facts; and yet, for these fables the one suffered martyrdom, and the other endured the loss of all things, and gave himself up to a life of ceaseless toil, and peril, and suffering, which he too, probably, closed by a martyr's death. Were these men mad? Was Paul a crazy enthusiast? Was Stephen a blind fanatic? If they were not, how does Dr. Strauss account for their conduct on his hypothesis? How does he account for the conduct of thousands who were partakers of like faith with them, and who gave equal evidence of their intelligence and their sincerity? Hegelianism must read human nature strangely backward if its votaries believe that men of common sense are prompt to suffer and to die for a popular myth—the mere shadow of a shade.

6. Dr. Strauss's hypothesis is continually landing him in the most glaring inconsistencies and paralogisms. In the course of expounding and defending it, he again and again begs the question, or contradicts in one place what he has affirmed in another. Thus (to give an instance or two) he sets out with the denial of the authenticity of the Gospels, and yet repeatedly, when it serves his purpose,

appeals to them as authentic sources of information. Nay, so far has he carried this inconsistency, that in one part of his work he attempts to determine how much authentic matter there may be in John's Gospel, by the amount of agreement between that Gospel and "the synoptical Gospels."* Of course this assumes the authenticity of these Gospels; for a work not itself authentic can be no standard of the authenticity of another.

Again, when Dr. Strauss would instruct us how it came to pass that the early disciples of Christ invented and received so many miraculous stories concerning him, he tells us that they were bent upon "glorifying" their Master. Let us, then, ask him how he *knows* that they were bent on glorifying their Master? His answer is, "Look at the stories they have invented and received concerning him." Such is the battledore-and-shuttlecock fashion after which Dr. Strauss plies his reasonings.

Once more: it is essential to Dr. Strauss's mythic hypothesis to assert that the people among whom these myths arose were in a state of almost childish simplicity, in which the exercise of the reasoning powers was almost unknown, and a credulous imagination held supreme sway over the mind. But when one comes to listen to Dr. Strauss's exposition of the deep philosophy—too deep, we confess, for us to understand—involved in these myths, one cannot sufficiently marvel at the profound thought and far-

* Vol. ii, p. 187. Eng. Trans.

searching analysis of these simple-minded children of an unhistoric age. According to Dr. Strauss it is no vulgar, no shallow science that constitutes "the absolute sense of Christology." If we may believe him, "the main element of that idea [of humanity embodied in the Gospels] is, that the negation of the merely natural and sensual life, which is itself the negation of the spirit (the negation of a negation therefore) is the sole way to the true spiritual life;" and again he tells us that "humanity is the union of the two natures—God become man, the infinite manifesting itself in the finite, and the finite spirit remembering its infinitude; it is the child of the visible mother and the invisible Father, nature and spirit," &c.* And is it indeed true that through this "palpable obscure" of speculation these simple-minded children of an all-believing uncritical age walked with a firm step and an open eye? Is it indeed true that the deep philosophy of Hegel was embodied by the early Christians in their conception of Jesus? Was Teutonic science anticipated by childish simplicity? If so, we are forced upon one of two conclusions: Either the early Christians were not such credulous children as Dr. Strauss represents them; or, Teutonic philosophy is but a child's dream after all.

There is another thing in Dr. Strauss's hypothesis utterly irreconcilable with that state of primitive credulousness in which it is essential to his whole

* Vol. iii, p. 438.

theory of a mythic origin for the Gospels, that we should believe the early Christians to have existed. It is the exceedingly artificial and elaborate character which, by his own showing, belongs to those so-called myths. When we peruse the analysis he gives of the different Gospel narratives, we cannot but wonder at the exceeding patience and ingenuity which must have presided over their formation. Let us take, by way of illustration, the first that occurs in his book—the annunciation and birth of the Baptist. According to Strauss, this was got up in the following way. An individual had in his mind a compound image blended from scattered traits respecting the late birth of distinguished individuals as recorded in the Old Testament. He thought of Isaac, whose parents were advanced in their days when they were promised a son, and this suggested that John's parents should be the same. He remembered how doubtingly Abraham asked, when God promised him a seed which should inherit Canaan, "How shall I know that I shall inherit it?" and hence he made Zecharias ask, "Whereby shall I know this?"—he called to mind that the name of Aaron's wife was, according to the LXX., Elizabeth, and this suggested a name for John's mother. Then he bethought him of Samson's birth being announced by an angel, and accordingly he provided an angel to announce that of John also—he glanced at popular Jewish notions regarding angels visiting the priests in the temple, and thence obtained a locality

for the angelic apparition to Zacharias—he got back next to Samson, and from his history supplied the instructions which the angel gives respecting John's Nazaritic education, as well as the blessings which it was predicted that John's birth would confer upon his country—he next went to the history of Samuel, and borrowed thence the idea of the lyric effusion uttered by Zacharias on the occasion of his son's circumcision—he then fixed upon a significant name for the prophet, calling him John, after the precedent of Israel and Isaac—the command to Isaiah to write the name of his son, Mahershalal-hash-baz, upon a tablet, recalled to him the necessity of providing Zacharias also with something of the same sort; and as for the dumbness of the priest, it was suggested by the fact that the Hebrews believed that when any man saw a divine vision, he usually lost for a time one of his senses. "So," exclaims Dr. Strauss, after a long enumeration of all these particulars, "we stand here upon purely mythical-poetical ground!" Indeed! then must the people of that mythical-poetical age have been deeply versed in all those artifices of composition, by which in these later times men of defective powers of fancy continue to construct stories by picking and stealing odds and ends of adventure from those who have written before them. No hero of the scissors-and-paste school ever went more unscrupulously to work than did this unknown composer of the story of John's birth. And, after all, he made it look so

natural and so apparently original, that it required a German philosopher of the nineteenth century to find out for the first time, that it was a mere piece of Mosaic from bits of the antique—a "mere thing of shreds and patches!" I blush for the degeneracy of the age. The most practised of booksellers' hacks now-a-days is far, very far behind this skilful literary man of a mythical-poetical age.

Such are some of the logical inconsistencies into which Dr. Strauss is betrayed by his theory. I adduce them not as against him, but as against it. They are not the slips of a careless or inconsistent reasoner; they are the errors into which a man of much acuteness and dexterity has been led by having a false theory to defend.

7. The admission made by Dr. Strauss—that Jesus was a rabbi who actually lived and taught in Judea—is fatal to his whole doctrine of myths as applied to the Gospel narrative. We may hold it to be a condition of a myth that the subject of it is himself a mere idea. A man who has actually lived may become the subject of fables and romances; he never becomes the subject of a myth; the mere fact that he was known to live as a man among men forbids this. Jupiter, Apollo, Bacchus, Brumha, and the other deities of genuine mythology, have all been the subjects of myths, for they were themselves each a myth; in the language of the apostle, they are "nothing in the world." Of Mohammed, Zoroaster, Confucius, we have many fables, but no myths; for

these were real men, and left upon the consciousness of their fellow-men a sense of their reality, which put them altogether out of the mythic sphere. Now, by Dr. Strauss's own admission, it is to the class of the latter and not to the former that Jesus belongs. He was a man who led an actual life upon earth. Until, then, Dr. Strauss can show any case in which an historical man has become the subject of a myth, I must hold him bound either to admit the credibility of the Gospel history, or to take the ground which when he wrote this book he described as untenable, that the greater part of that history is a pure fable or romance.*

I might add other reasons to these for rejecting this theory of the mythic origin of our canonical Gospels. But it is unnecessary. What I have advanced is sufficient, I believe, to show the utter groundlessness and folly of such an opinion. After having looked at it on all sides, I can regard it in no other light than as a mere phantasy—the creation of men of ingenuity and learning, but whose

* I marvel to find a man like Mr. Grote so egregiously departing from the true idea of a myth, as to adduce Goethe's story about Lord Byron and the Florentine tragedy as "a mythus about Lord Byron." It was neither more nor less than a piece of clever fiction, which Goethe no doubt knew to be such, and which the rest of the world received as true simply because they had no means of contradicting it. The moment it came before the view of one who knew Byron's history, it was, as Mr. Grote says, "contemptuously blotted out." If such things as this are to be called myths, there is an end of all scientific reasoning on the subject of mythology. We shall be told next that every hoax is a myth.

intellects have never been disciplined to the calm pondering of evidence, and who have never been sufficiently impressed with the sacredness of *facts*, or the absurdity of making such give way to mere subjective impressions and abstract reasonings.*

* "Strauss, the Hegelian theologian, sees in Christianity only a *mythus*. Naturally: for his Hegelian 'Idea,' itself a myth, and confessedly finding itself in everything, of course finds in everything a myth; 'Chimæra chimæram parit.'"—Sir W. Hamilton, Discussions in Philosophy and Literature, &c., p. 787, 2nd edit. Hegelianism is a bold but phantasmal attempt to evolve the All out of Nothing. Its aim is (as one of its ablest professors once expressed it to myself) to construct a philosophical system by a purely logical process, without taking heed of any fact in the universe, which, when constructed, shall explain every fact in the universe. Of such a scheme, may we not say with Romeo,—

> "O anything of nothing first create!
> O heavy lightness! serious vanity!
> Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms?"

PART II.

PROOF FROM CERTAIN FACTS RECORDED IN THE GOSPELS THAT CHRISTIANITY IS DIVINE.

Consequetur omnium librorum summa perversio, et omnium, qui memoriæ mandati sunt, librorum abolitio, si quod tanta populorum religione roboratum est, tanta hominum et temporum consensione firmatum, in hanc dubitationem inducitur, ut ne historiæ quidem vulgaris fidem possit gravitatemque obtinere.

Augustinus, *De Mor. Eccl. Cath.*, c. 29, § 60.

Omnis homo mendax. Solus autem Christus, Deus et homo, nunquam repertus est, nec reperietur, mendax ; nec verba ejus mutabuntur aut deficient ; qui solus expers mendacii et erroris oracula nunquam irritanda protulit.

Corn. Agrippa, *De Van. Scient.*, c. 99.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

ARGUMENT FROM THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST AS PRESENTED BY THE EVANGELISTS.

In recording the transactions of our Lord's life upon earth, the evangelists have unconsciously delineated his character. I say *unconsciously*, because in none of them do we find any formal attempt to set forth articulately those features of mind and conduct by which he was distinguished. His biographers content themselves with simply narrating what he said and did and suffered, without making any pretensions to sit in judgment upon his procedure, or to guide their readers to the estimate which ought to be formed of his personal excellences and merits. They leave the facts they narrate to speak for themselves, scrupulously, and, as perhaps no other historians ever did, restricting themselves to the position of mere witnesses who have no call to pronounce opinions, but whose sole business it is to narrate what they have seen and heard. In the narrative they have given, however, they have

placed their Master in lights which bring out with great distinctness not only the leading outlines, but the minuter features of his character. Their account of him, when carefully perused, leaves a picture of him upon the mind, all the parts of which are firmly drawn and harmoniously coloured. We can have no hesitation in arriving at a very definite conclusion as to what he was from the careful consideration of what they tell us he said and did.

It is no part of my present design to attempt a detailed analysis of the separate features which go to make up this picture. To attempt this would lead me into too wide a field for my present purpose; nor is it at all necessary for the prosecution of the argument I have it in view to erect upon our Lord's character as suggested by the accounts of the evangelists. It will be enough for that end that I briefly remind the reader of certain general peculiarities which come out very broadly as marking that character, and which go to distinguish it from the characters of all other men, as the single specimen of its kind.

Now, in contemplating the character of our Lord, as that comes out from the narrative of his earthly history, it cannot fail to strike every one that it is *absolutely faultless*. His historians nowhere *say* that his character was faultless; but they never place him in an attitude in which we can detect a single flaw in his mental or moral development. We see him, in the course of their narrative, under a great variety of aspects and in many different lights; but

the picture is alike perfect in each. Sometimes he is presented to us in private, surrounded by those whom he loved and who loved him, and in whose cherished society he could give free scope to all the warmer and tenderer emotions of his soul. At other times we see him in public, now waited on by wondering crowds who "were very attentive to hear him," now exposed to the crafty assaults of bitter and spiteful adversaries, who sought "to entangle him in his talk." At one time he is shown to us amid circumstances of joy and triumph; at another, amid scenes of the deepest humiliation, the severest agony, and the most poignant sorrow. We see him brought into relation with people of every class and character—high and low, rich and poor, young and old, learned and ignorant, soldier and priest, lawyer and rabbi, prince and peasant, Pharisee and Sadducee, the devotee of the temple, the student of the schools, the money-changer of the market-place, and the harlot of the streets. Never was a life in all its phases more faithfully and fairly laid before us. And what is the impression which, from the contemplation of him in all these changes of outward circumstances and relations, is left upon the mind of the reader as to his character? Is it not by universal consent this, that here is One who is absolutely superior to circumstances—One on whose serene and lofty spirit the changes that affect sublunary interests can produce no permanent or injurious impressions—One for whom his friends never had to

make any apology, for whom the impartial critic needs not to demand any forbearance, in whom the keenest-sighted of his enemies can find no fault—One whom no transient weakness from within, no cunning temptation or frowning terror from without, could divert for a single moment from his onward career of virtue, beneficence, and purity—One, in short, who, tried by the loftiest standard of spiritual excellence, must be pronounced, in the language of a disciple who had seen as much of him as any man while he was on earth, "without blemish and without spot?" 1 Pet. i, 19. In this judgment all impartial minds have concurred. The first teachers of Christianity, wherever they went, proclaimed that "he had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" an assertion which they, as teachers of a system at the basis of which lies the doctrine of the universal depravity and guilt of the race, would have been the last to make, had they not been cogently assured of the truth of it. To Him the regards of all who have mourned over the imperfections of our race, and longed for its recovery, have been directed as the one unsullied embodiment of that excellence for which they long—the one model and type of "the perfect man." And even in cases where there has been no disposition to receive his religion as divine, homage has been rendered to his character, as that of the only being of our race in whose conduct there can be discovered no flaw or weakness.

Freedom from fault, however, is rather a negative

than a positive excellence; and it is possible to conceive a character on which this verdict must be pronounced, which yet shall fail to command our love or veneration from the absence of positive and striking virtues. In order, therefore, to do justice to the character of our Lord, we must observe that its excellence is no less positive than negative—that it is distinguished alike by the absence of all defects, and by the presence and combination of all virtues. A character on which such a verdict may be justly pronounced is one which must stand by itself among the characters of men. And herein lies the perfect originality and the great peculiarity of the character of Jesus Christ. A character uniting in itself all positive excellences, without any drawback arising from weakness or sinfulness, is what we are never permitted to see, and what the experience of our race forbids us to hope to see in the ordinary course of humanity. The limits of human endowment and attainment are such that the virtues which we observe in separate individuals are never all combined in the same individual. So much, indeed, is this the case, that it rarely happens that we find a character among men distinguished preëminently for more than *one* excellence. In the most illustrious specimens of our race we can always come to a point where excellence terminates and failing begins. Not an instance occurs in which we do not find that something is lacking which a perfectly good and great man ought to possess. If the mind be of the

robuster order, how often is it deficient in the gentler and more lovely features of mental development! or if there be a profusion of the more graceful and attractive virtues, how often have we to deplore the absence of firmness and vigorous attachment to principle! The man of ardent temperament is often rash, inconsiderate, and foolish; while the man of cool judgment and acute intelligence is often callous, sometimes selfish and calculating, not unfrequently cunning or mean. The dignity which would make some characters venerable becomes oftentimes, from the want of needful gentleness, the occasion of their being disliked or feared. The meekness and gentleness which would make some characters amiable, not seldom, from the want of counterbalancing dignity, only render them pitiable. Everywhere we find some lack in the characters of men. The yearnings of the soul after perfection can find no object in the actual world of men on which to rest. If we can but find men there who are *good upon the whole*, we must count ourselves happy. A man, whose excellences fairly balance his defects, is as near an approximation to the fair ideal of character as in our present condition we can legitimately expect to see.

This imperfection of man is to be traced to that depravity which is the consequence of our fallen condition, and which operates in various ways and with different degrees of force in different individuals. Apart from this, there seems no reason

why one man should not, in kind at least, be as good as another, whatever differences there might be in degree among men. The good qualities which we see in one man might surely be reproduced in another; and there can be no reason why they are not universally exhibited, but that there is a flaw in our nature which forbids perfection here below. But when Jesus Christ appeared in our world, humanity was in him allied to no element of evil—touched with no shade or spot of depravity; and hence in him there was nothing to prevent the fullest combination of all moral as well as all intellectual excellences. Holy from the womb, in the congenial soil of his heart all virtues sprang up and grew spontaneously. At this stage of our argument, however, we are not entitled to lay any stress upon the source or cause of his perfection. I but notice it in passing as an august reality which commands my reverence. That to which my argument more strictly confines me is, the simple fact itself that in the character of Christ there is a display of every excellence. The more closely we study it, the more shall we be struck with this. It is not the presence of one or two great qualities that commands our reverence; it is the extraordinary *combination* of excellences which it displays that constitutes its peculiar attraction. Meekness and majesty—firmness and gentleness—zeal and prudence—composure and warmth—patience and sensibility—submissiveness and dignity—sublime sanctity and

tender sympathy—piety that rose to the loftiest devotion, and benevolence that could stoop to the meanest sufferer—intense abhorrence of sin, and profound compassion for the sinner, mingle their varied rays in the tissue of our Saviour's character, and produce a combination of virtues such as the world never saw besides, and such as the most sanguine enthusiasm never ventured to anticipate. We behold him, when only twelve years of age, astonishing the doctors of his nation by the precocity of his intelligence and the extent of his knowledge, yet, at the first summons, turning away from the flattering murmurs of their applause, to yield obedience to his unlettered mother, and to share the toils and the penury of her humble home. We see him at a later period, after he had been manifested to Israel, and had entered upon his career of public activity as a teacher sent from God, continually engaged in methods of beneficence, cheerfully descending to the humblest offices of kindness, listening to every cry for pity that was addressed to him, having patience with the dulness of his disciples, and teaching them "as they were able to bear it;" while, at the same time, with all the dignity of a heaven-sent messenger, he was reproving the vices of those in high places, exposing the sophistries of those who were misleading the people, and making his most acute and able antagonists feel, that against him all their ingenuity and all their resources were utterly impotent and useless. We see him also dur-

ing the trying scenes which preceded his crucifixion, when he appeared as a criminal at the bar of the high-priest and of Pilate, never losing his dignity, never parting with his composure—majestic amid reproaches—calm under injuries—with the port of a sovereign and the serenity of a martyr—meeting every assault of his enemies without flinching and without retaliation—and uniting with a fortitude that astonished the stern and haughty Roman, a meekness and a tenderness that had all but melted that iron heart. In short, view our Lord at any stage of his earthly career, and under any of the circumstances in which the evangelists have represented him, and we see the same *completeness* of character—the same unparalleled *combination* of excellences, the existence of any one of which in an ordinary mortal, in the degree in which they all appear in Christ, would draw toward him the admiration of all who knew him.

Nor is this all. Another thing noticeable in our Lord's character is, that not only was it marked by a combination of excellences, but these were *so* combined as to produce a *perfect balance or equipoise* of character. What the evangelists narrate of him leaves upon the mind of the reader the conviction that there was in him not only a complete but an harmonious development of moral excellence. He had not only all the entireness, he had also all the symmetry of virtue.

This, too, is essential to our conception of a per-

fect character. As in a machine, the great aim of the constructer is to bring all its parts into a state of perfect equilibrium before he applies the motive power; so in the mind there should be a state of balance among all its faculties and tendencies, else it will work irregularly, and, it may be, mischievously. For want of this we see many good and worthy men not so much respected and not so useful as they otherwise might be. It is not that virtues are wanting in their minds, so much as that, of those they possess, the one counterworks and neutralizes the other, instead of all combining into one harmonious organization, and conspiring to one grand result. A man may, for instance, be both benevolent and just, but these qualities may be so ill adjusted in his constitution, that his benevolence shall often operate to the injury of justice, and his justice shall display itself at the expense of generosity and kindness. It is amazing how much of antagonism there is in the characters and conduct of men, arising from this cause; and how frequently, in consequence, the sum total of a man's agency, in its bearing upon the well-being of the world, resembles that of a set of algebraic quantities, in which for every positive there is an equivalent negative, so that the result of the whole is *nothing*.

Now, in the character of our Lord, as set before us in the Gospels, nothing of this sort is apparent. In the wondrous assemblage of excellences which his character displays, all are in perfect keeping

and harmony with each other. View him in whatever light we please, he is always the same. There is nothing too much, nothing too little, about him. He is as free from excess of virtue on the one hand, as from deficiency of virtue on the other. There is no overlapping, no collision, no interference of one quality with another. You never need to make allowances for him. You never require to plead for him on the ground that the abundance of one virtue compensates for the deficiency of another. In him we see all virtue in order and in symmetry. The entire machine, intellectual and moral, moves on smoothly and equably. It reaches its result not by a system of checks and compensations, but by direct impulses of its inherent motive power. There is a preëminent conviction left upon the mind of the soundness, healthiness, and dignity, no less than of the completeness of the character thus presented to us. It has all the repose and all the harmony of incarnate purity.

These observations might be greatly extended, but I have adduced enough to furnish a basis for the argument I wish to build upon the character of Christ, as unfolded in the narrative of the evangelists, in favour of the truth of his religion. This argument turns upon two propositions; the one of which is, that the character of our Lord, as delineated by the evangelists, must have been real; and the other is, that, being real, it gives an incontestable voucher for the truth of what he taught.

I.

I have to show that the character of Christ, which the evangelists have delineated in their narratives, must have been real; in other words, that in order to write as they have written of Jesus Christ, they must have had before them, in the person and conduct of their Master, actually such an embodiment of excellence as they have depicted.

Now, the alternative here is between admitting this, and supposing that the account of our Lord in the Gospels is fictitious; possessing, perhaps, some ground-work of fact, but owing its most striking features to the genius and skill of the narrators. This latter hypothesis, which was not unknown to our older English deists, has been recently set forth with new attractions by the advocates of infidelity, and may be regarded as that by which for the present they seem prepared to stand. It will be our business to examine its tenability; and for this purpose I shall adhibit no other test than such as is furnished by the facts already noticed, viz., that from the narrative of these four evangelists emerges the embodiment of a character which is without any fault, which combines in it all excellences that can dignify, adorn, or benefit man, and in which all the qualities it displays exist together in perfect harmony, symmetry, and equilibrium. To such a test no one can object, for it assumes nothing but simply, that the character of Christ given by the evangelists is what every one who reads their narratives may

see it to be. Assuming this, what I am prepared to show is, that these narratives cannot be fictitious, but must present the history of a real personage, whose character was actually such as they have described.

I observe in the outset, that, whatever be the vigour of human genius, there are certain limits which it cannot pass, and certain laws by which its operations are regulated, just as surely as the events of the material universe are regulated by the laws of nature. When, therefore, it is affirmed that any of these limits of human genius has been surpassed, or any of these laws superseded by any human being, the case becomes one of *miracle*, as truly as when any of the laws of the external world is suspended, and the boundaries of nature's operation are exceeded. Now, this principle I propose to apply to the case before us; my purpose being to show that if the character of Christ, as given in the Gospels, is fictitious, it is such a fiction as can be accounted for, in its production and its publication, only by calling in the aid of the *supernatural* or the *miraculous*.

Let it be observed, then, in the first place, that the hypothesis, that the character of Christ as given in the Gospels is fictitious, involves the assumption that those who composed it were *bad men*. It is beyond all doubt that they give forth their narratives as true history, and in the plainest manner affirm all that they say to be fact; and they do this,

not as a professed novelist might, merely for the sake of amusing the reader, or beguiling him into wisdom by

"Truths severe, in fairy fiction dress'd,"

but avowedly for the purpose of erecting upon the basis thus laid a religious system, the reception of which by men cannot but materially affect their interests for time and for eternity. In such a case it is impossible to regard them in any other light than as impostors of the very worst kind, if the character they thus delineate, and the occurrences they thus narrate, are mere fictions. To men who could act such a part, all forms of deceit and dishonesty must have been congenial. To such an extent must selfishness have predominated within them, that if they could but have gained their end, whatever that may be supposed to have been, they were ready to tamper with the most sacred interests, and the most awful destinies of themselves and others. Nay, to such a height must their unscrupulous audacity have proceeded, that they hesitated not to bring in the Almighty as an accomplice in their scheme, and to use his terrible name to give greater authority to their deception. Such were the evangelists and apostles of Christ, on the supposition that the history of our Lord, as they have recorded it, is fictitious! Now, it may be fairly put to the common sense of any one at all familiar with the laws and operations of the human mind, whether it be in the nature of things conceivable or possible

that men of such depraved minds *could* have conceived, and drawn out, and sustained a character such as that given by them to our Lord. Is it credible that men of wicked and disordered minds could have delineated a character of such perfect excellence and such entire symmetry? Would there have been *no* indications, in the course of the lengthened narrative, that the character depicted was one in which the writer had no real complacency, with which he had no sincere sympathy, for which he felt no genuine admiration? Is it not a fact that no man has ever yet attempted to draw a model character without introducing a large portion of *himself* into the picture; so that the most elaborate creations of the poets are continually recalling to the reader the peculiar idiosyncrasies, tendencies, and pursuits of the author? It is only natural it should be so. The features which a man throws into such a picture are insensibly those on which his own mind rests with most complacency, and with which he is accustomed to associate most vividly his conceptions of enjoyment. We might without hesitation go further, and say that it is impossible for any man to sustain, through a shifting and lengthened fictitious narrative, a model character with which he has no sympathy in his own soul. When, then, the evangelists are affirmed to have done this; when it is said that they, being men of selfish, dishonest, and corrupted minds, have been able to conceive and construct a narrative which

unfolds a character in every respect the opposite of their own; and when, more than all this, they being persons of disordered moral perception and ill-regulated minds, are affirmed to have drawn from their own imaginations alone a character which, through the varied scenery of a changeful life, presents one unsullied aspect of perfection, harmony, and equipoise; the demand made upon us is such, that all we know of the laws and the limits of human ingenuity constrains us to say, that only on the supposition that these men wrote under superhuman aid, could we be justified in yielding to it our assent.

A second consideration which enhances the difficulty of the infidel hypothesis in this case is, that the character of Jesus Christ as given by the evangelists, instead of being an assemblage of such virtues as were held most in repute among the men of their day, is absolutely *original*, and calculated rather to condemn than to illustrate the prevalent notions of the community of which they formed a part, concerning a perfect character. It is observable in the literature of every country, that the hero of a contemporary tale is always made to concentrate on himself more or less fully the features which, to the men who lived when the author wrote, appeared the most attractive. Hence works of fiction, of this class, have come to possess an historical value, as unconscious but faithful witnesses of the manners, the opinions, the prejudices, and general character

of society at the time and place of their production. But if the narratives of our Lord's history in the evangelists be fiction, they present the hitherto unparalleled peculiarity of being written among a people of a strongly marked character, and by men who shared in the general character of their countrymen, while the person whose history they record, is represented as broadly diverging in all the great leading points of his character from the standard most in repute among his countrymen and contemporaries. The evangelists were Jews, and were subject to all the prejudices of Jews. They had been educated to regard the rigid observance of the Mosaic ritual as the highest of all virtues. They had been taught to look upon the religious zeal of the Pharisees with reverence, as the noblest form of piety. They expected a Messiah who was to appear with great pomp and power, to establish a temporal dominion on the earth, of which Jerusalem was to be the centre. They had been trained in a morality which taught that it was praiseworthy to hate their enemies as cordially as they loved their friends. Their own nation they had been accustomed to think of as alone worthy of the divine favour, and on all others they looked with contempt or aversion. Such were the men in their native original character, and in this they but shared with the rest of their people. And yet these men, in presenting the history of One whom they evidently wish the world to love and honour, have presented

to us a character which continually condemns themselves and their nation. They have placed before us a Jew who taught that the observance of the Mosaic ritual was worthless unless accompanied with the devotion of the Spirit; who spoke of it as soon to be superseded by a system of spiritual worship; who inculcated love to man as man, whether Jew or Gentile; who, claiming to be the promised Messiah, repudiated all ideas of temporal power and glory; who announced the equality of all people in the sight of God; who fearlessly exposed the false grounds on which the reputation of the Pharisees rested; and who went so continually and decidedly athwart the current of national feeling and prejudice in Judea, that at last the people and their rulers could endure it no longer, but rose against him and clamoured for his death. If we admit that our Lord's history is real, all this receives, of course, a sufficient explanation; for the evangelists, as faithful chroniclers, found no difficulty in producing this perfectly original portrait, because they had before them the actual living personage to whom it belongs. But if we suppose their narrative fictitious, it brings before us a literary phenomenon for which it will not be possible to account. How could it occur to the evangelists to conceive such a character? What could have suggested the idea of it to their minds? What was there in the society in the midst of which they lived to furnish materials for such a picture? By what marvellous efforts of ge-

nius could men, educated as they had been, invent the incidents by which, with such consummate skill and *naïveté*, they have developed so grand and so original a conception? Unquestionably, if they were mere inventers in this case, they have achieved what no genius, either in ancient or modern times, besides has been able to accomplish.

But as yet I have only understated the case. Supposing it possible that *one* man of transcendent genius had been able to rise above the prejudices and opinions of his nation, though himself destitute of any outward training but what was calculated to deepen the hold of these upon his mind; and though himself a selfish and unprincipled man, to conceive and delineate in action a character of perfect purity, harmony, and beauty—how are we to account for *four* such men doing this, and not only so, but all presenting us with substantially the same picture? If it be in a high degree improbable that one man, in the circumstances of the evangelists, should produce such a piece of art, does not the improbability become almost infinite that four men should succeed in doing this? And when we find that these four men have not only each produced his picture, but that all the four pictures substantially agree, does not the supposition of their narratives being fictitious become absolutely impossible, and the very idea of it ridiculous? Let the experiment be tried; let any four of the best men and greatest geniuses of our day be selected; and let them be

requested to write each a fictitious narrative with a view of delineating a perfect character; and can any one doubt what would be the result? Is it not certain, not only that the incidents introduced by them would be totally different, but that the chances would be as infinity to one against their falling upon the same general conception of the character they wished to illustrate? In all ordinary cases such a concurrence between four historians who plainly wrote independently of each other, and for a different class of readers in the first instance, would carry with it irresistible evidence of the reality of what they, as professed eye-witnesses, recorded. Suppose we saw four paintings professing to be portraits of the same person by artists whose different style and execution evidently showed that they had worked independently of each other, and that in these four pictures the same likeness was presented; could we for a moment doubt that all the painters had had the same living original before them? or, would any person be listened to, who, in the face of this concurrence, should insist that all the four were but studies from imagination? Not less unreasonable and absurd is it to doubt the veracity of portraits drawn by the pen, when, on comparing several, the productions of separate artists, we find the likeness in all agreeing. On what, indeed, is it that we proceed in the most solemn decisions which we form on human character and conduct, but on the *concurrence of competent witnesses?*

Is it not upon this, that the character, the hopes, the life of the accused is staked, on the occasion of every criminal trial? And do we not, in all such cases, proceed with the most perfect confidence, on the ground that the concurrent testimony of several independent witnesses is a fact which can be accounted for only on the supposition that what they concur in attesting actually did take place? Every one feels that such a concurrence, in a case where each witness drew his materials from his own imagination, would be a departure from ordinary natural laws, for which only the supposition of supernatural agency could account.

Up to this point I have argued against the hypothesis that these narratives are fictitious, from the serious difficulties which the *authorship* of the books lays in the way of such an hypothesis. But not less serious are the difficulties which assail that hypothesis from the fact of their *publication.* It is to be borne in mind that these delineations of our Saviour's life and conduct were sent forth during the lifetime of many who had seen, and heard, and known him while he lived in Judea. If, then, they be fictions, they are fictions which their authors had the audacity to publish while multitudes were still alive who could expose the deception, and who had every reason to make public that exposure; and not only did they dare to do this, but they did it with such success, that in the very places where Jesus must have been best known, they succeeded in get-

ting great numbers to risk all worldly advantages by embracing the religion built upon their story! Is this, I ask, credible? is it possible?

If we look deliberately at the circumstances of the case, we can hardly fail to be shut up to the conclusion that a narrative of this kind, so received, *must* be true. A great Teacher appears in Judea, in the middle of the most enlightened epoch of the ancient world. He has intercourse with the people in various ways for thirty-three years, during the last three of which he is continually in public, teaching in all their towns and villages, and attracting the utmost public attention. He at length brings down on him the wrath of the rulers of the nation, who ultimately, by unrighteous means, compass his death. A few weeks after this event, his followers boldly assert, not only his innocence of the crimes laid to his charge, but his absolute immunity from all evil and failure. They hold him up to the world as a pattern of unblemished holiness. They charge his enemies with having wickedly "slain the Holy One and the Just." They persist in this declaration to the end of their lives, and write it down in books which they submit to the scrutiny of their and his contemporaries. What is the result? Are they branded as impostors, and is their testimony by universal consent repudiated as false? On the contrary, they have the satisfaction of finding that no man ventures to question the truth of their delineation, and that myriads, both of their own coun-

trymen and others, receiving their testimony, yield homage to the Master whose sayings and doings they record. This is a *fact*, and it has to be accounted for. Now there are only two ways in which it *can* be accounted for: either the account given by the evangelists is true, and therefore credible; or some *supernatural* delusion must have been produced on the minds of the Jews, in consequence of which they discredited their own experience, and received, as true, statements which they had every reason to disbelieve, and every inducement to repudiate. The latter of these suppositions all parties will unite in rejecting. But if so, a logical necessity compels to the admission of the alternative.

Once more: if we suppose the description given in the Gospels of our Lord's conduct and character to be fictitious, we must be prepared to assign an adequate motive for the composition and publication of such a fiction. One of the most fixed and certain laws of human action is, that no man engages in any laborious or dangerous undertaking, except under the constraint of some powerful motive. This is a principle as settled as any of the laws of the material universe; so that we can count upon it as surely as we do upon them. Now, when a man publishes a fiction, the motive must be either desire of gain, or love of applause, or delight in the contemplation of such a character as that ascribed to the hero of the piece, or a desire, through the medium of an attractive tale, to improve men by

leading them to admire and love virtue as embodied in the person whose history professedly is narrated. But none of these motives can be supposed in the case before us. There was nothing to be gained, either of wealth or honour by the apostles, from their asserting the excellence of their crucified Master, or from their contriving and attempting to palm upon the Jews such a story as his. And it has been already shown, that men wicked enough to practise a deliberate cheat upon the world in a matter so solemn, and so fraught with irretrievable results as the basis of a new religion, could have no sincere delight in a character so transparently sincere and pure as that of Christ, and no honest, certainly no absorbing and self-sacrificing desire to serve the cause of virtue and benefit their fellows. When, then, we are asked to believe that the narrative of the evangelists is a fiction, the proposal is that, contrary to all experience, and to a fixed law of our mental dynamics, we shall regard these men as having composed, published, and issued this fiction, not only without any conceivable motive, but in the face of the strongest possible motives to the contrary. Ease, interest, inclination, were to be consulted by their remaining silent; but all these they deliberately and perseveringly sacrificed for the sake of inducing the world to accept a fiction for a truth. The supposition is monstrous. What the infidel asks us to believe is a natural impossibility. He would have us to accept a miracle without

the hypothesis of divine agency to make it credible.

It appears, then, that on the infidel hypothesis it is impossible to account for either the origin, or the publication, or the reception of such a representation as we find the evangelists concur in giving of their Master. The nature of the case is such, that we are constrained to admit the reality of that representation; or, as the only alternative, resort to the supposition of a series of miracles accomplished by supernatural power, for the purpose of producing and giving success to a falsehood. By declining both sides of this alternative, the infidel places himself in the unphilosophical position of refusing the only supposition that will account for what he cannot but admit to be facts.

II.

Having shown that the character of our Lord, as delineated by the evangelists, must be accepted as historically true, I proceed to argue that, *if so, his religion must be divine.* The argument here lies in a narrow compass; but it seems as cogent as it is brief.

It will be admitted, as not subject to the least doubt, that Jesus Christ, in his public teaching, distinctly and unequivocally gave himself out as a divinely-commissioned messenger to men. He asserted that he had come from God—that God was with him—that the doctrine he taught was of

God—and that those who rejected him rejected God.* Now, in making this assertion, Christ either spoke the truth, or he did not. If the former, then there is an end of the controversy; for if he was a divinely-commissioned and divinely-sanctioned teacher, whose doctrine is that of God, there can remain no further doubt as to the truth and divinity of his religion. But if this, his solemn and repeated asseveration, was false, then the fact of his having made such an asseveration has to be accounted for, and that in accordance with his known character and conduct in general.

Again: our Lord repeatedly asserted that he was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament to the Jews, and that in him all the predictions of the ancient prophets concerning the Messiah were fulfilled. Of this it is unnecessary to cite passages in proof, for no one who has ever looked into the Gospels needs to be told that this was the one great profession of his life as a public teacher. Now, Jesus Christ either was the predicted Messiah, or he was not. If he was, we must receive him as the great deliverer and teacher promised by God to the world; we must reverence him as the delegate of God to us; and we must regard as divine those predictions concerning him which are contained in the Old Testament, and, by consequence, the writings in which these are contained. If he was not the

* John v, 37; viii, 16, 38, 42; x, 18, 38; Matt. x, 40; John xii, 48; xiii, 20, &c.

Messiah, then the fact of his saying he was, is a thing to be explained, and that in accordance with his known character in other respects.

Now, I can conceive of but two suppositions which can be made by way of accounting for these two facts on the infidel hypothesis. According to that, our Lord's assertions that he was divinely commissioned, that his doctrine was of God, and that he was the predicted Messiah, were false. Either, then, our Lord was himself deceived as to his own position and pretensions, or he knowingly uttered what was false in order to deceive others. One or other of these suppositions the infidel must make; he has no other alternative. But will either of them stand the test for a moment? Is either of them, even remotely, compatible with that character which the evangelists have ascribed to Christ, and which has been already proved to be a real and not a fictitious character? Is it possible that a man so upright, so honest, so pure, so absolutely without sin in all other respects, should yet defame his whole life by one great, pervading, protracted, and diabolical falsehood? What, we may ask, among the motives which sway the human will, can be conceived as the one which prompted and sustained such a monstrous incongruity? Or by what superhuman effort of vigilance, self-restraint, and ingenuity could a man who was the subject of such a fearful moral schism, and within whose bosom such an incessant strife was raging, preserve through life that unruf-

fied serenity, that undisturbed harmony of moral development which impressed upon those most intimate with him the conception of such a character as we find unfolded in the Gospels, and led them to renounce all earthly advantages and comforts, and take the place of exiles and martyrs rather than not proclaim it? Surely the common sense of mankind cannot but pronounce this supposition *impossible.* Shall we, then, adopt the supposition that our Lord was himself deceived as to his own pretensions, and that when he set himself forward as the Messiah, and as a Divine Teacher, he did it honestly but mistakingly? If we adopt this supposition, we must regard Jesus Christ not only as weak and foolish, but as positively insane. Nothing short of the wildest hallucination will account for a man really believing himself to have come from God, to be in continual intercourse with God, to be the medium of divine revelation to men, and to be the object of ancient prophecy and prediction, when nothing of all this is the case. A man may fall into mistakes, it is true, as to his own merits and claims, and yet be entitled to respect for his general intelligence and sanity; but, for a man to make *such* a mistake as is hereby ascribed to Christ is irreconcilable with any condition but that of the most deplorable insanity. Were such a case presented in a court of law, there is no judge or jury that would hesitate for a moment as to the verdict to be pronounced. Is this, then, the conclusion to which we

are come in reference to Christ? Impossible! His whole character gives the lie to it. The calmness of his deportment, the prudence of his zeal, the sobriety of his language, the clearness of his intelligence, and the perfect symmetry and equipoise of his whole nature emphatically exclude such a supposition. The very idea is unnatural and repulsive. It is utterly out of keeping with all we know of him. If ever there was a pure, a bright, an untainted, an undisordered intellect in human frame, it was that of Jesus Christ.

Neither of these hypotheses, then, will stand the test of this simple historical fact, that the character of Christ was such as the evangelists depict it. But these two hypotheses exhaust the resources of infidelity on this head. Has she any other to suggest? If not, does it not behoove her to relinquish her position, and in the spirit of sound, scientific inquiry accept the only hypothesis on which this undoubted fact can be satisfactorily explained?

CHAPTER II.

ARGUMENT FROM THE MIRACULOUS EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST NARRATED BY THE EVANGELISTS.

No one in reading the narrative of our Lord's life in the evangelists, can fail to be struck with the *miraculous* character of a large proportion of the incidents therein recorded. The history of Christ begins with a miracle of a very remarkable kind, and it ends with one which, if less startling, is not less decidedly supernatural; while, during the interval, we are continually encountering cases in which our Lord was either the subject of miraculous operation, or was himself the performer of miracles. His birth, we are told, was in consequence of the direct agency of the Creative Spirit, exerted upon the person of a young and pure virgin. No sooner had the event happened than a vision of angels announced it to certain shepherds, who immediately betook themselves to the place where he was born, to offer their homage. A new and mysterious luminary in the heavens attracted the notice of the wise magi of the East, and brought them to pay their obeisance to the new-born babe. An angel sent to warn of danger led to his being carried down to Egypt, so

as to escape the bloody rage and jealousy of Herod, who feared in him the rise of a power dangerous to his own. After a lapse of nearly thirty years, spent in the retirement of a provincial town, he suddenly appeared in the vicinity of the metropolis, claiming to be the Messiah promised to the fathers of the Jewish people, and in support of that claim he taught publicly, and performed many works of a supernatural kind,—such as healing all manner of diseases instantaneously and by a word, casting out devils, opening the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, raising the dead, feeding large multitudes of people with what was naturally sufficient only for a very few, calming the stormy elements by an utterance of authority, and reading with an unerring intuition the secret thoughts and feelings both of friend and foe. In addition, we are told that on three distinct occasions sensible evidence was afforded of his heavenly commission: once by a descent upon him of the Spirit of God in some visible form, accompanied by the utterance of a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" a second time by an utterance of substantially the same testimony, followed by a command to "hear him," delivered to certain of his disciples who were with him on one of the mountains of Palestine, and who, as one of them many years afterward wrote, were there "eye-witnesses of his majesty," when he was transfigured before them, and "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment

was white as the light;" and a third time, when, in answer to a prayer of his, that God would glorify his own name, "there came a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again,"—a voice which, at once loud and sweet, made some who stood around think "it thundered," while "others said, An angel spake unto him." Matt. iii, 17; xvii, 5; 2 Pet. i, 16; John xii, 28–30. After three years spent in continual exertions to instruct, convince, and benefit his countrymen according to the flesh, Jesus was cruelly and unjustly put to death according to the Roman method of crucifixion, in order to gratify the malice and appease the jealousy of the rulers of the Jews, whom he had provoked, not less by his repudiation of their narrow and bigoted sectarianism, than by his free denunciation of the evil practices in which they indulged. Even here, miraculous attestations accompanied him;—as his Spirit passed away in the triumphant exclamation, "It is finished!" a supernatural darkness overspread the earth, an unseen hand rent the sacred veil of the temple in twain, and an earthquake shook the earth till it rent the rocks, flung open the tombs, and awoke the slumbering dead. And then came the crowning miracle of the whole, as respects direct attestation of his divine commission—his resurrection from the dead. After lying the greater part of three days, enveloped in grave-clothes, and in a tomb hewn out of the rock and firmly closed, he, on the morning of the third

day arose from the dead, and came forth from the tomb, and appeared to his disciples; and, as it would seem, along with him arose many of the saints, whose tombs had been shaken open by the earthquake which accompanied his death. After showing himself to his disciples on repeated occasions, and having much close intercourse with some of them, he, in the view of the assembled multitude of them, ascended up into the air, until at length he was lost to their sight; thus closing, in a miracle of triumph, a life which had been one continued scene of marvel from its commencement to its close.

Now these things the evangelists tell us as matters of history and fact. They narrate them in the soberest, quietest manner possible, as if they were mere matters of course. They have no formal way of introducing them, no method of calling attention to them, no disposition to linger over them, as if they wished to make the most of them. They narrate them just as they narrate the commonest incidents of their Master's life. They evidently, therefore, intend that their readers shall regard them as standing on the same ground of historical reality as any other parts of their narrative. They write as persons who themselves believed these things actually to have occurred, and who would have their readers to accept them, not as mere rumours, or as vehicles for the administration of spiritual truths, but as simple facts which came to pass within the

sphere of our Lord's personal activity while he was on earth. Enlightened historical criticism, therefore, has no other verdict to pass upon the narrative, than that either such things actually did occur, or that its authors have deliberately committed to writing as history what they must have known to be pure fictions.

Attempts have, indeed, been made to save the reputation of the evangelists as men of honesty, by imputing their *bona fide* narratives of the miraculous occurrences in our Lord's history to unintentional mistakes. This idea, first suggested by some of our English deists, was at one time highly popular among the German neologists, who sought to explain all the miracles recorded in the Gospels by referring them to natural occurrences, of which the disciples of Jesus were either ignorant or which they misunderstood. Thus, for instance, our Lord's resurrection was got rid of by supposing that he was only in a swoon when buried, and that the door of the sepulchre having somehow fallen open, the fresh air revived him, and he took the opportunity of escaping the vigilance of the guard, and fleeing from Jerusalem to the retreats of the Essenes on the banks of the Jordan, where he lay hid from his enemies. This, it is easy to see, is but a clumsy attempt; for it seeks to get rid of one miracle by supposing another. Such a feat of agility and endurance on the part of a man who had suffered crucifixion, had been pierced to the heart by a

spear, and had lain in a swoon for three days in a closely-shut tomb, and wrapped in grave-clothes, is quite as much a suspension of the ordinary laws of nature as an actual resurrection from the dead. It only needed that such a method of dealing with the Gospel narratives should be allowed free scope to render it utterly ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of all men; and accordingly, it no sooner reached its highest development than it dug its own grave, and was buried amid the universal mockery of even the neologians themselves.* This attempt, then, to save the character of the evangelists at the expense of common sense, may now be regarded as entirely exploded, so that nothing remains but the alternative either to receive their miraculous narratives as *true*, or to regard them as *deliberate and intentional falsehoods.*

If we are content to assume the former of these suppositions, we shall then have only to inquire, What bearing have these miraculous narratives upon the claims of Jesus Christ as a religious teacher, and, by consequence, upon the pretensions of his religion to be received as divine? But if we hesitate between this and the latter supposition, we shall then have to inquire whether there be any reason constraining us to believe that these men have been guilty of the crime of falsehood, and whether it be not rather in the highest degree improbable that in

* Strauss never loses an opportunity of making himself merry at the expense of the interpreters of this school.

their case such a charge should hold true. The necessity of dealing with the sceptic prescribes the latter as the proper course to be pursued in the first instance, in this essay. When the veracity of the witnesses has been vindicated, it will be proper to proceed to estimate the argumentative worth of what they attest.

I.

Now, in asserting the veracity of the evangelists, in their miraculous narratives, it is legitimate, in the outset, to claim for them the privilege to which all men are entitled, that of being held honest until they have been proved to be not honest. It is contrary to all justice to affix a stigma upon any witness, and bring him into court with a prejudice hanging over him in respect of his integrity, in the absence of all proof, or even reasonable presumption, that he is otherwise than trustworthy and sincere. Thus to throw discredit upon the honesty of another is itself to be dishonest; and as it would not be tolerated among honourable men, where even the smallest interest is at stake, it ought not to be tolerated where interests so momentous as those hanging upon the claims of Christianity are involved. The evangelists, therefore, are entitled to be treated as honest men, who would not deliberately attest a falsehood, until some evidence that they were not such be supplied; and as no such evidence has yet been furnished, as not even a

shadow of suspicion has, from any legitimate source, been cast upon their uprightness, it is no more than what is barely due to them, when they unitedly and seriously assert what they must have known to be true if it did occur, to claim that their statement should be received with the presumption that it is true. This is asking for them nothing more than in common fairness all men are entitled to.

Further, this presumption advances in strength, when it is considered that what they narrate rests not merely on their individual testimony, but on the common belief of hundreds of their contemporaries. Of this there can be no doubt. Whatever hypothesis we assume as to the origin of the Gospels, there is no questioning the fact that the things therein recorded were the things most sincerely believed among the Christians at the time they were written. Their close agreement with each other, and their universal reception by the Christians, are explainable only on the supposition that the things narrated in them were viewed by all Christians as having actually taken place. If, then, the Gospels be, as we have proved them to be, genuine, the miracles they record were believed to have been real occurrences by multitudes who were alive and on the spot at the time they are said to have occurred. Every one of these, then, becomes a distinct witness in the case, so that what we have to deal with is not the testimony merely of four men, but the testimony of a large multitude of men—of

a community. It is not Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John only, that depone to these occurrences; it is the united voice of the whole Christian Church of the first century that proclaims them to us. Are all these men, then, to be put aside as liars? is this "cloud of witnesses" to be swept away as an imposture and a mockery? is such a combination of testimony to be treated as if it were no better than the unsupported story of some convicted knave? Common equity and common reason alike forbid such a conclusion.

Thirdly, The improbability that the primitive Christians should concur in a falsehood of this kind is greatly increased when we consider the *object* for which alone such a falsehood could be propagated. That object could be none other than the recommendation of the religion which they professed to others. We must suppose, therefore, that hundreds of persons residing in or around Jerusalem conspired to impose upon their neighbours by asserting that during the lifetime of the existing generation certain miracles had been performed there, knowing all the while that such was not the case, but hoping by this means to induce the people to embrace the religion, by the Author of which it was alleged these miracles had been wrought. Now, it seems hardly possible that any rational understanding can believe this. The difficulties in the way of such belief are insurmountable. There is, first of all, the difficulty of accounting, on this supposition,

for these persons themselves becoming Christians; for, if they were sincerely devout, how could they endure to embrace a religion which required such unblushing falsehood to sustain it? and if they were hypocritical and wicked, what could have induced them to become the followers of a faith not only unpopular, but in which insincerity and falsehood are denounced as among the greatest crimes? Then there is the difficulty of comprehending how any human beings could have the audacity to expect that such a falsehood could exist for a moment, when uttered before a community in the midst of which the deeds ascribed to Jesus Christ were alleged to have been performed. These deeds, if done at all, "were not done in a corner," and there must have been thousands then alive who could from their own personal knowledge, arrive at perfect certainty as to whether such things occurred or not.* Of this the first preachers of Christianity were fully aware, and so far were they from seek-

* Eusebius has preserved a remarkable passage from the lost Apology of Quadratus, a Christian of the apostolic age, and one of that class of officers called evangelists, whose work, the historian tells us, consisted in "travelling abroad, ambitious to preach Christ to those who had not heard the word of faith, and to deliver to them the Scripture of the divine Gospels."—*Hist. Eccles.*, l. iii, c. 37. In the passage cited by Eusebius, Quadratus says: "The deeds of our Saviour were always at hand; for they were true; those who were healed, those who were raised from the dead, were not merely seen cured and raised, but they were always at hand; and that, not merely while the Saviour was on earth, but after he had gone away they continued for a considerable time, so that some of them reached even to our times."—*Hist. Eccles.*, l. iv, c. 3.

ing to shun the test which the knowledge of their countrymen thus supplied, that they from the first appealed to this in vindication of the authenticity of their story. "Ye men of Israel," said Peter, on the day of Pentecost, "hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves know," &c. Acts ii, 22. If, then, we are to suppose that the immediate followers of Jesus expected to gain any support to their cause from boldly asserting as well-known facts what every man who heard them speak must have known to be falsehoods, we must set them down as a company of the greatest simpletons that ever lived—we must, in fact, believe them insane. But this is not all; we must believe that they had some secret power of so inoculating other people with their insanity that they got them to believe these stories, and to embrace at all hazards a religion which had to propagate for its credit a series of statements which they had the most perfect assurance were most impudent and disgraceful falsehoods! This is another difficulty, and in my judgment an insuperable one, in the way of the supposition now under notice. People may be persuaded to embrace opinions which are not true, when they are ingeniously defended or eloquently urged; people may be cajoled into believing that something marvellous was done in secret, which they would have seen had they been there; but that people

could be brought to believe that miracles had been done in the streets and in public assemblies, and in the midst of large gatherings of people, in their own day, and at their own place, by one whom everybody knew, and that the sensation excited by them was such that his fame had spread over the whole country, when all this was a pure and interested falsehood, is such a phenomenon as this world, I venture to say, never saw, and never will see. Our choice, therefore, lies between believing the miraculous events recorded by the evangelists, and believing all the impossibilities at which I have just glanced. To a sound mind there does not appear much room for hesitation here. Sense and nonsense may be both marvellous, but when our choice lies between marvellous sense and marvellous nonsense, it does not seem as if any rational man could hesitate long which to believe.

Fourthly, A belief in the veracity of the evangelical narrative of our Lord's miracles becomes a psychological necessity, when we consider the *consequences* to the primitive Christians themselves of their assertion of the facts contained in that narrative. According to our natural constitution, our actions are regulated by certain mental laws, which are as fixed in their operation as the laws of the material creation, and any manifest suspension or superseding of which is as much a miracle as is the suspension of any of the ordinary laws of nature.

Now, one of these laws of mind is, that men never act without a motive; and another is, that the nature and force of the motive are indicated by the character and permanency of the act. On these laws we proceed with the utmost confidence in the daily business of life. We never hope to induce men to follow any particular course, unless we can supply an adequate motive to induce them so to do; and if at any time we see men acting in a manner which appears to us strange, we never think of attributing their conduct to the want of a sufficient motive; we only ask, What can be their motive for acting thus? and set ourselves, from the character and tendency of their conduct, to find out by what motive it is prompted. Now, let us apply these principles of our nature to the case before us. The fact with which we are presented is, that the apostles of Jesus Christ, and their associates, affirmed continually the truth of the miraculous events in his history, and that certain of them committed accounts of these to writing. For this fact we have to account; and if we would not ascribe it to miracle, we must account for it according to the ordinary laws of human conduct. The apostles and evangelists, then, must have had an adequate motive for the way in which they thus acted: what was it? If we regard them as honest men, who affirmed these things because they knew them to be true, and because they deemed them to be highly important, we need inquire no further; their motive, in this

case, is most manifest, and it is sufficient to account for every part of their conduct: as honest men they could not do otherwise than they did, if their story be true. If, on the other hand, we suppose that story false, and themselves consequently dishonest, it will be impossible to bring their conduct under any of the known laws that regulate the proceedings of men—nay, it will be impossible to construe it so as not to represent it in the light of a direct violation of certain of these laws. When men attempt to persuade their fellow-men to believe a falsehood, it can only be in the hope of thereby gaining some selfish end. No man can doubt this; it is as certain as any of the laws of nature. If, then, the disciples of Jesus Christ reported falsely of him, it must have been because they had something to gain thereby; and if, after making the experiment, they persisted in this course, it must have been because they found it to be actually a profitable one. This is the *only* supposition which the man who rejects their testimony can make. Well; will it stand the test of facts? We know the history of these early advocates of Christianity; was their course a prosperous one in a worldly point of view? Did their attachment to Christ bring them fame, power, wealth, honours, ease, or any of those advantages which men covet in this life? Did it minister to their pride, or vanity, or love of indulgence? Were they in any way the better or happier for it in a worldly point of view? Who does not know that there is almost

a species of mockery in the very asking of such questions? Who needs to be told that the only secular result to the first preachers and professors of Christianity was the scorn and hatred of all around them, accompanied with the severest penalties and the cruelest inflictions at the hands of those who were in power? There was nothing to gratify the pride of intellect in their merely repeating the lessons which they had learned from their Master. There was no reputation likely to accrue to them from upholding the pretensions of one who had been put to death as a blasphemer, amid the execrations of ruler and populace. There was nothing gratifying to human nature in imprisonment, confiscation of property, cruel scourgings, banishment, stoning, and such like. It was but a poor end of life in a worldly point of view, after years of toil, penury, and suffering, to be cast to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, or to be wrapped in a robe of pitch, and slowly consumed at the stake as a light in the streets at night. And yet such indignities, injuries, and tortures, the early Christians persisted in enduring* rather than give up their belief in Jesus, and their assertion of the facts concerning him recorded in the evangelists. Plainly, therefore, the hypothesis which would attribute their conduct to selfish motives, to a desire for worldly advantage, must be set aside as simply ridiculous;

* See the testimony of the heathen Tacitus, Annal., l. xv, c. 44. Comp. Juvenal, Sat. i, 155.

and with it falls to the ground the supposition that they were the propagators of what they knew to be false, for the one supposition involves the other.

The difficulties which press upon the infidel who, in the face of such facts, calls in question the veracity of the evangelists, are such, that the wonder is, that any man pretending to the possession of reason could persuade himself to encounter them. It may seem an easy thing to say, "The apostles and their followers were deceivers," but the man who says this *intelligently* and *honestly*, must have a capacity of believing impossibilities such as men of ordinary powers cannot comprehend. For what must such a one believe in order to be consistent? He must believe that certain men got up a story in which they affirmed that one Jesus performed, or was the subject of, a number of miracles which took place for the most part in the most public places in Jerusalem and the land of Judea—that they published this story in Jerusalem itself, a few weeks after their Master had been put to death by the malice of the rulers of the Jews, and while thousands were living who could say whether the story was true or false—that though the story was quite false, as respected its most remarkable facts, they got hundreds of these very people to believe it—that they put themselves to very great trouble to propagate their fabricated story, though everywhere it brought on them persecution and suffering—that they and multitudes of their followers suffered martyrdom in its most

appalling shapes, rather than give up this falsehood —and that they wrote the story in books in which they faithfully narrate not only the wise words and wonderful actions of their Master, but also all that he endured at the hands of the Jews, as well as a good deal that is not especially honouring to themselves; and this, with the view of perpetuating the unprofitable fiction after they themselves were dead. Such is the creed of the infidel! He *must* believe all this if he refuses to believe the narratives of the evangelists. There is no escape from this alternative. A man cannot be simply a *sceptic* in a case like this. If he will not believe the miracles in the Gospels, he must believe a great many things far more incredible than any of these, *in order* to disbelieve them. One thing is certain, a miracle of some sort he *must* accept—either a natural one or a moral one—either the miracles of the Gospels, or the miracles presented in the conduct of the early Christians, if we suppose them impostors. It does not seem difficult to determine which of these a really honest and intelligent man will adopt.

On these grounds I cannot but regard the veracity of the four evangelists, in their narrative of the miraculous events of our Lord's history, as *proved*. It may be worth while, however, to mention, before passing from this part of the subject, the corroboration which this conclusion receives from various external sources. It is corroborated by the *consent of the Jews;* for (not to lay any stress on the testi-

mony of Josephus, inasmuch as the passage in his writings referring to Jesus is regarded by many eminent scholars as spurious, and is undoubtedly largely interpolated)* there are such references to our Lord in the Talmud as clearly show that, with whatever hatred the Jews regarded the memory of Jesus of Nazareth, they never thought of calling in question either his existence, his miracles, or his vast influence. Dr. Lardner, who has examined this subject with his usual pains and candour, thus states the sum of their testimony: "In the Talmudical writings Jesus is mentioned. . . . . They call his mother by the name Mary. . . . . They have mentioned several of our Saviour's disciples who, as they say, were put to death. They say our Saviour suffered as a malefactor at one of the Jewish passovers, or in the eve of it, as the expression is. They seem, in some places, to acknowledge the power of miracles in Jesus and his disciples; and if they had not known that many miraculous works were ascribed to him, they would not have insinuated that he learned magical arts in Egypt, and brought them thence in a private manner, and then set up himself among his countrymen as an extraordinary person."† With the *opinion* of the Jews as to the power by which our Lord wrought his wonderful works, we have here nothing to do; they are ad-

* See Gieseler's Ecclesiastical History, by Davidson, vol. i, p. 63, where the whole literature of this question is given.

† Works, vol. vii, p. 189.

duced at present simply in the capacity of witnesses, and all that we want of witnesses is depositions as to *facts*. Making due allowance for prejudice, bigotry, and passion, the above may be regarded as a very unequivocal attestation of the general veracity of the evangelical history.

Before passing from the conduct of the Jews in reference to the miracles of Christ, there is one fact which has not been much noticed, but which is too important to be altogether passed over. If these miracles were fictitiously ascribed to our Saviour by his disciples, how comes it that they alone of all their contemporaries and nation bethought themselves of such a mode of commending their religious system? Or, how comes it that the Jews did not attempt to get up a set of counter miracles with which to meet and discredit those imputed to Jesus Christ? On this head the following remarks of the illustrious Edwards seem to me worthy of consideration: "If all that multitude, and that long-continued series of miracles, recorded to be wrought in confirmation of Christianity, were fictions, vain pretences, or enthusiastic whims and imaginations; why were there no pretences or imaginations of the same sort, on the other side, among the Jews, in opposition to these? Those of the Jews that were opposed to Christianity were vastly the greater part of the nation. And they had as high an opinion of the honourableness of those gifts of prophecy and miracles as Christians. They had as much in their

notions and tempers, to lead them to a fondness for the claim of such an honour to their party. They were exceedingly proud and haughty—proud of their special relation to God, and of their high privilege as the peculiar favourites of Heaven; and, in this respect, were exalted far above Christians, and all the world—which is a temper of mind (as we see abundantly) above all others, leading men to pretences of this nature, and leading them to the height of enthusiasm.

"There could be nothing peculiar in the constitution of the first Christians, arising from a different blood, peculiarly tending in them to enthusiasm, beyond the rest of the Jews, for they were of the same blood, the same race and nation. Nor could it be because they wanted zeal against Christianity, and a desire to oppose and destroy it; or wanted envy and great and virulent opposition of mind, to any pretences in the Christians to excel them in the favour of God, or excellency of any gifts or privileges whatsoever. They had such zeal and such envy, even to madness and fury.

"The true reason, therefore, why so vast a multitude of miracles were said and believed to be openly wrought among Christians, for so long a time, even for a whole age, and none among the Jews, must be, that such was the nature and state of things in the world of mankind, especially in that age, that it was not possible to palm false pretences of such a kind upon the world; and that those who were

most elated with pride, and most ambitious of such an honour, could see no hope of succeeding in any such pretences; and because the Christians indeed were inspired, and were enabled to work miracles, and did work them, as was pretended and believed, in great multitudes, and this continually for so long a time. But God never favoured their adversaries with such a privilege."*

Next to the testimony of the Jews may be ranked that of the heathens, especially those of the first and second centuries. Now, persons of this class not only attest very fully the existence, in great multitudes, of the Christians, and certify their virtues and indomitable attachment to their religion, but they distinctly mention Jesus Christ as the author of that religion, and confirm, in several important points the statements of the evangelists concerning him.† It appears, moreover, in the Apologies of Justin Martyr and Tertullian, that Pilate had sent to Rome an account of the miraculous deeds, the crucifixion and the alleged resurrection of Jesus, which had so deeply impressed the Emperor Tiberius, that he was inclined to offer him divine honours. Now, one might doubt the truth of this were it not well known that persons in the position of Pilate were in the habit of making reports of all remarkable events that took place in

* Miscellaneous Observations on Important Theological Subjects, pp. 145–147. Edinb. 1793.

† See the passages in Lardner, Works, vol. vii.

their governments, and were it not that the reference to the report of Pilate is made both by Justin and Tertullian, not in writings intended only for their fellow-Christians, but in works addressed, the one directly to the reigning emperor, and the other to the governor of Africa. It is incredible that men, knowing the world as both Justin and Tertullian did, should commit themselves in an Apology intended to procure favour for them and their fellow-Christians, by referring the emperor, or any of his officers, to public documents, for the authentication of their statements, had it not been perfectly well known that such existed, and would support their appeal. We are bound to believe, then, that among the state papers of the empire at Rome there existed a report by the Roman proconsul, then resident at Jerusalem, of the conduct and crucifixion of our Lord, corroborating the narrative of the evangelists.* Another corroboration, which, if less cu-

* See the careful and conclusive investigation of this subject by Lardner, Works, vol. viii, p. 231, ff. Attempts have been made to cast doubt upon the existence of any such documents as those referred to by Justin and Tertullian, but without success. We must take care not to mix up this question with that of the pretensions of the *extant* Acts of Pilate and his Letter to Tiberius. These are undoubtedly forgeries, but this does not prove that no such documents as those cited by Justin and Tertullian ever existed. On the contrary, as no person would have thought of forging writings under these titles, had it not been known that genuine writings of this kind existed, the existence of the counterfeit rather favours a belief in the genuineness of the documents alleged. Besides Lardner, two other great scholars, deeply versed in such inquiries, have vindicated the claims of these documents, Casaubon

rious, is not less important, is furnished by Celsus, the determined, and, it is presumed, able opponent of Christianity, in the latter half of the second century. Unfortunately his work against the Christians is lost, but in the reply to it written by Origen, and which has been preserved, we have large portions of it cited. Now, in these citations, Celsus frequently refers to the personal history, doctrines, and miracles of our Lord; indeed, he hardly omits anything of importance which the evangelists have recorded. As respects the miraculous events in our Lord's history, Celsus notices nearly all of them. He refers to the conception of Jesus as the work of the Spirit of God, and as produced by divine operation. He mentions the visit of the magi, with the appearance of the star—the flight into Egypt in consequence of the warning conveyed by an angel—the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove at his baptism, accompanied by the divine attestation of his being the Son of God—the portents attendant on his crucifixion—the rolling of the stone from the door of the sepulchre by an angel—and his resurrection from the dead, with his subsequent appearance to his disciples. He also refers to the miracles which our Lord himself wrought, especially his healing of diseases, his multiplying the loaves, his curing the lame and the blind, and his raising the

in his Exercitationes ad Baronii Annales, Ex. xvi, 154, p. 675, and Bishop Pearson, in his Lectiones in Acta Apostolorum, Lect. iii, § 4; and v, § 14.

dead.* These miracles Celsus admits him to have performed, though he tries to make out that others have done as much. His references to the other events in our Lord's life are full of mockery and scurrility, as might be expected in a heathen philosopher trying to write down Christianity. But it is worthy of notice that he rarely calls in question the facts themselves, and never once impeaches the veracity of the evangelists. How is this to be accounted for in so bitter and unscrupulous an adversary, excepting on the assumption that he knew it was in vain to attempt to cast doubt upon facts which were so notoriously true? Celsus would have stigmatized them as falsehoods, had he entertained the remotest hope that such a stigma would adhere to them. As it was, his only resource lay in admitting the facts, but attempting to account for them by magic—a resource which, as it was the first to which the enemies of Jesus betook themselves, (for we learn from the evangelists, that even during his lifetime the rulers of the Jews tried to impute his miracles to the power of Beelzebub,) so was it the only one which the early opponents of his religion dared to employ. In the present day the infidel is as little likely as the Christian to embrace such an hypothesis; but by the infidel, no less than by the Christian, the distinct testimony of the early enemies of Christianity to the reality of the facts ought to be held worthy of the gravest regard.

* See Lardner, Works, vol. viii, p. 5, ff.

II.

It appears, then, that we have the strongest possible reason for receiving the miraculous events in the evangelists as historically true. The balance of probability in their favour is such that, according to the ordinary laws of human belief, we cannot but admit that they actually occurred; or, at any rate, if we would consistently maintain the opposite, we must accept as true a multitude of things so incredible that no human mind can possibly understand, realize, and believe them.

Having arrived at such a conclusion, the question as to the historical veracity of these narratives ought to be settled in our minds affirmatively. The only proper evidence of alleged events is moral probability arising from the concurrence of the witnesses as tested by suitable criteria; and when it is shown that the narratives in the Gospels have this evidence in the highest degree—a degree so high as to approach to absolute demonstration—it is surely the part of wise and honourable minds to banish all reluctance springing from unreasoning prejudice, to receive these narratives as credible, and to use them for such purposes of further proof as they may seem in sober reason capable of subserving.

It often happens, however, that even when men are obliged to admit an argument to be logically just and unanswerable, they resist the conclusion to which it conducts, in consequence of some feeling,

or, it may be, conviction in their mind, that in spite of all that can be said in its favour, the position alleged cannot be true. They hold it to be in itself a thing so utterly incredible, that no reasoning in its favour makes any impression upon them. Their logical understanding is, if not convinced, at least silenced; but the region of belief remains unaffected notwithstanding. It seems to them as if an intuition antecedent and superior to all logic forbade their giving credence to the assertion, and they recoil from the reasoning by which it is proved, as a sort of attempt to coerce them into a belief of what they think they cannot believe. That this is the case with many in reference to the question under discussion, I cannot but feel assured; though, at the same time, I am persuaded that not a few *assume* this position merely because it gives them a plausible pretext for casting aside as incredible what they have previously resolved that they will not credit. I cannot say that the former class give evidence of a very sound or well-disciplined mind; still, if we regard them as sincere, we are bound to consider their case, and, as far as may be, to remove difficulties out of their way; and whether they be sincere or not, it concerns our cause that no objection that can with any show of plausibility be advanced against any of our positions should be slightingly or negligently treated. I propose, therefore, before proceeding further, to devote some space to the consideration of the principal objections which are wont

to be urged against the reception of the miraculous narratives in the Gospels as historically true. And here, that I may not tread on ground which may be considered already sufficiently trodden, I shall take up these objections as they appear in the most recent writings on the infidel side.

In entering on this topic, I cannot but preface what I have to say with a complaint of the extreme vagueness and ambiguity of expression indulged in by nearly all the more modern objectors to Christianity—qualities which render it frequently impossible to arrive at any certainty that we have exactly apprehended their meaning. It was not so with the earlier race of infidels, at least in England. Bolingbroke, Collins, Tindal, Hume, and the rest, write like men whose conceptions were precise, and who knew exactly what they intended to say. The result is, that with a very moderate degree of attention, one can always obtain an exact perception both of their positions, and of the reasonings by which they have endeavoured to sustain them. The advantage of this to an opponent is manifest; and this may perhaps be one reason why it has been so singularly denied to us by those who of late years have sought to shake our faith in the truth of Christianity. Another reason may be, that as most of the infidelity which has been recently propagated through the press here has been borrowed from Germany, and as the German writers are not remarkable, as a class, for pellucidity of thinking, it

may be shrewdly suspected that they have communicated a share of their cloudiness to their British disciples,—if, indeed, there be not room to doubt whether the latter always understood their masters, or their masters always understood themselves.*

* "Scarcely one of our philosophers," says Menzel, "is understood by the people."—*German Literature*, vol. i, p. 312; Gordon's Translation. "Our Pantheistic mists are all of German origin, whether they have spread out into the sunny plains of France, or enveloped the shores of England, which little required their additional haze."—*Douglas of Cavers, Popery and Infidelity*, p. 55. "I have never, in fact, met with a Hegelian (and I have known several of distinguished talent, both German and British) who could answer three questions, without being driven to the confession that he did not as yet fully *comprehend* the doctrine of his master, though *believing* it to be all true. Expectants—in fact, 'Papists in philosophy!' Hegel himself, not long before his death, made the following declaration: 'I am downcast about my philosophy: for of all my disciples only one understands it; and he does not.' (Blätter, f. liter. Unterhalt. No. 351, Dec. 1831; *et alibi.*) The one disciple, I presume, was Gabler; but did Hegel understand himself?"—*Sir W. Hamilton, Discussions on Philosophy and Literature*, p. 787, second edition. It may be shrewdly doubted whether those in this country who have come forth as popular expounders of the German philosophy, in its application to questions of religion, are more likely to see through the "palpable obscure" of Hegelianism, than those whom Sir W. Hamilton questioned. The Germans themselves have given up all hope of being understood or appreciated in Britain. Bunsen has, indeed, compassionately tried to illumine our darkness, and open for us a royal road to German philosophy; [see his Aphorisms prefixed to his work on Hippolytus and his Age;] but his success has not been such as to give him much encouragement to proceed in his benevolent efforts. People accustomed to the perspicacious thinking and accurate expression which have so long honourably characterized British philosophy and theology, still persist in believing, that what a writer cannot distinctly put into words, he has not realized in thought. This determination, however, on the part of the mass of our countrymen, to comprehend before they adopt opinions, is regarded by

But be the reason of this mistiness what it may, of the fact itself every one must have had experience who has looked into any of the recent productions of the opponents of Christianity. With whatever learning they may be filled, or however adorned by the graces of style, they exhibit a vexatious want of clearness and precision, in an argumentative point of view. At almost every stage, one needs to pause and ask, What does the writer mean by this? In what sense does he employ this word? or, in what way does this affirmed conclusion connect itself with the alleged premises? In an inquiry the great object of which should be the ascertaining of truth, such a method of procedure cannot be too strongly condemned.

The general position assumed by these writers against the miraculous narratives in the Gospels is, that they are *incredible*. Now, here it is extremely difficult to know what they mean. A statement is

the Germans as a sad obstacle in the way of our enlightenment. A friend of mine, a professor of philosophy in a German university, and a Hegelian, once tried to initiate me into the mysteries of that faith. He had not proceeded far, until I happened to say, in reference to one of his positions, "Does that mean so and so?" using, at the same time, an instance to illustrate my conception. "Ah! my friend," was his reply, as he took his pipe from between his lips, and turned on me his large blue eyes, full of the most genuine compassion, "you will never be a philosopher; that English pragmatism sticks to you too closely." I think it is Menzel who says, somewhere, that the Germans write much more intelligibly in Latin than in German, and that the reason is, they are obliged to arrive at a precise conception of what they mean to say, before they can attempt to express themselves in a foreign tongue.

incredible, when either it is such as the human mind cannot by its very constitution hold for true; or, when the evidence against it is such that no mind can, in accordance with sound principles of evidence, admit it. But in neither of these senses can the miracles recorded in the Gospels be declared incredible;—not in the former sense, for the mere fact that they have been, and are now firmly and intelligently believed by thousands of men, sufficiently refutes the absurd assertion, that the mind of man is physically incapable of regarding them as true; not in the latter, because, as has been already shown, the evidence in favour of these miracles so immensely preponderates, that the admission of their historical veracity is the only way to avoid being forced to admit what every man must feel to be immeasurably less likely to be true than they. When, therefore, infidels meet our arguments in support of this conclusion, by saying that the thing affirmed is incredible, they must use this word in some sense peculiar to themselves; or they must be regarded as employing it as a mere vague and indefinite formula of expressing that they do not choose to believe what we have proved.

Remarks of a similar kind may be offered upon their frequently repeated assertion that miracles are *impossible*. This term, as every one knows, is ambiguous. There are three senses in which impossibility may be predicated of anything. It may be *logically* impossible, in which case the assertion of

it can be demonstrated to involve a contradiction; it may be *morally* impossible, by which is meant that the probabilities against it are such as to leave no doubt on the mind as to its being untrue; or it may be *physically* impossible, by which we mean that the being to whom it is ascribed could not, without setting aside natural laws to which he is subject, perform it. Now, in which of these three senses are miracles affirmed to be impossible? Not certainly in the first; for no man would dream for a moment of maintaining that there is any *contradiction* in the affirmation of any of the miracles which Jesus Christ is said to have wrought; not in the second, because, as I have already shown, the probabilities are not against, but in the highest degree in favour of the Gospel miracles, and it would be no reply to this, simply, in the face of the evidence, to deny the conclusion; not in the third, for as a miracle is something ascribed to *divine* power, and as there is nothing in the stability of nature to prevent its order being altered or suspended by the same hand by which it was at first constituted, it would be absurd to say that such an event is physically impossible.* In what sense, then, are miracles

* "It is an obvious truth, though, strange to say, continually overlooked in discussions of this nature, that the existence of a creation necessarily implies a Creator; and that, if its subsequent, ordinary duration may be kept up by seemingly natural causes, the energy to which it owed its first production must have been, in the usual meaning of the term, miraculous, that is to say, a deviation from what are now deemed to be the established laws of Providence. This observation may be applied with almost equal

to be held impossible? or what can infidels mean by scattering these ambiguous words among the masses, unless conscious of the weakness of their cause, they would compensate for infirmity of reason by boldness and largeness of asssertion.

When from these more general assertions we descend to objections of a more specific kind against the miracles recorded in the Gospels, we find our path impeded by the same want of precision and distinctness. What, for instance, can be meant by the following passage from one of the most recent writers on this subject:* "It is not incredible that God should raise the dead, for his ability to do so is abundantly evident in nature; it is incredible only

certainty of inference to the moral phenomena of human history, as to the physical."—*Shuttleworth, Consistency of Revelation with itself and Reason*, p. 127. "What say you to the relics that stand out in such bold relief from the rocks beside us, [the Eathie Lias,] in *their* character as the results of miracle? The perished tribes and races which they represent, all *began* to exist. There is no truth which science can more conclusively demonstrate than that they all had a beginning. The infidel who, in this late age of the world, would attempt to fall back on the fiction of 'an infinite series,' would be laughed to scorn. They all began to be. But how? No true geologist holds by the development hypothesis; *it* has been resigned to sciolists and smatterers; and there is but one other alternative. They began to be *through the miracle of creation.* From the evidence furnished by these rocks, we are shut down either to the belief in *miracle*, or to the belief in something else infinitely harder of reception, and as thoroughly unsupported by evidence, as it is contrary to experience."—*Miller, Footprints of the Creator*, p. 279. See also the admirable remarks in the Eclipse of Faith, p. 245, &c.

* Mackay, Progress of the Intellect as exemplified in the Religious Development of the Greeks and Hebrews, vol. i, p. 23.

that he should do so in a manner inconsistent with his own eternal laws." Now, here it seems to be admitted that it is perfectly credible that God should raise the dead, provided this were to be done without any infraction or interruption of any of the laws of nature. What *can* such an assertion mean? Is not the raising of the dead itself an act inconsistent with the ordinary laws of nature? and if so, is it not utter nonsense to make the non-violation of these laws the condition on which alone it is to be believed that this violation of them actually took place? Perhaps it may be suggested that by "the eternal laws" of God here, the writer means the *moral* principles on which the Creator conducts the government of his intelligent universe. I do not gather that this is his meaning from his adjoined statements; but rather the contrary, for he goes on to speak of it as "no irrational inference which should have ascribed an admitted infraction of those laws to Beelzebub"—words which clearly fix his allusion to *such* laws as were infringed by our Lord when he performed the miracles which his enemies imputed to the powers of evil, *i. e.* the *ordinary physical* laws. But, allowing that such were his meaning, and admitting at once that it is impossible for God to violate any moral law, I would ask, what *relevancy* has this to the case in hand? In what possible sense could it be affirmed that the miracles of Jesus Christ were inconsistent with the moral laws of God? When he raised Lazarus from the

dead, what moral law, human or divine, did he violate? When he himself was raised from the dead by the power of God, with which of God's eternal laws of truth and righteousness was this exercise of the divine power inconsistent? The absurdity here is only a little less glaring, it is not less real than on the former supposition.

By some the impossibility and incredibility of miracles have been argued on the ground that the laws of nature are, like the laws of morality, essential manifestations of God, and, consequently, that he can no more be supposed to set aside or violate the one, than he can be supposed to set aside or violate the other. To this reasoning I cannot see that it affords any relevant or adequate reply to say, that as moral ends are more important than physical, it is perfectly compatible with the highest conceptions of God, to suppose that he would, for the attainment of a great moral end, such as that involved in revelation, suspend for a season a law of the physical universe; for the question is not whether God will make subordinate ends give way to higher, but whether, for the attainment of any end whatsoever, he will act contrary to his own nature. The argument, in fact, is essentially Pantheistic; it rests upon the identification of God with nature; and confounds the laws of nature with manifestations of essential Deity. Deny this position—affirm the existence of a personal Deity, distinct from nature, though omnipresent through it, and omnipotent

over it, and any speciousness that belongs to the argument disappears. For in that case the laws of nature are not something belonging to the essence of God, but are simply certain arrangements which he has made for carrying on the created universe. In this respect they differ entirely from moral laws; these are not arrangements or modes of creatural being, they are principles which have their basis in the divine essence. A law of nature simply expresses the mode in which God wills that a certain succession shall take place; a moral law expresses an eternal and unchangeable form of the divine existence. God cannot lie, because the necessity of his nature forbids it; God can raise a man from the dead, because the law that a man once dead remains dead is no part of God, no fact flowing out of the necessity of his nature, but simply an arrangement which, for certain reasons, he has seen meet to appoint over man. The argument is thus clearly futile. He who made the arrangements of nature, for certain wise ends, may, when he sees meet for any sufficient reason, alter or suspend them.

Of all the recent assailants of the credibility of the Gospels, Strauss is the one in whose writings one finds the greatest amount of clearness and distinctness of statement. In his observations, however, on the subject now before us, his usual clearness of conception and expression seems to have deserted him, and he writes as vaguely as the least vigorous of his followers. In the early part of his work he lays

down certain criteria by which he proposes that the historical credibility of the Gospel narratives shall be tested, and among them is one intended especially to bear upon the miraculous portion of these narratives. The whole of this portion he would strike out, on the ground that "the absolute cause never disturbs the chain of secondary causes by single arbitrary acts of interposition, but rather manifests itself in the production of the aggregate of final causalities, and of their reciprocal action." By "the absolute cause" must be here intended God; so that this statement simply amounts to a general assertion that God never interrupts the regular course of events by any single arbitrary act of interposition. Now, if by "arbitrary" here it be intended that God never interferes to suspend or violate any of the ordinary laws of nature, without a sufficient reason, the assertion is one in which all pious men will agree, as, in fact, one of the most obvious commonplaces of theology; but it is one also which every person of any intelligence will perceive to be utterly irrelevant to the matter in hand. No advocate of miracles ever asserted anything so monstrous as that God, in performing these, acted recklessly, and set aside the laws of his own universe, for the mere sake of doing so; on the contrary, the whole use of an appeal to miracles in proof of Christianity goes upon the assumption that these are never performed, except for a certain and worthy purpose, such as we affirm the exhibition of the

divine authority of that religion to be. To say, therefore, that God never interferes with the ordinary course of nature except for a sufficient reason, is simply to affirm what the advocates of miracles have always affirmed, and what, to be consistent with themselves, they cannot but affirm. On the other hand, if by "arbitrary interruptions of the ordinary course of nature," Dr. Strauss intends acts which are the immediate result of the divine volition, and are, consequently, departures from or violations of the ordinary laws of nature, then to affirm that God never does, or has done such acts, is simply to beg the whole question. Let Dr. Strauss *prove* that God never has done this, and he will forever settle the controversy in favour of his own side; but, in the mean time, as the thing which he chooses to say God never does, is precisely the thing which the evangelists, apostles, and early disciples constantly affirmed that our Lord, by the help of God, repeatedly did, we cannot allow him to puff aside their strong and convincing testimony by a mere *ipse dixit* of this sort. Before we give up all to follow him in this matter, he must at least show us some sign by which we may believe that he is authorized to tell us with such unhesitating assurance within what limits the Omnipotent confines his power, so as *never* to do anything beyond these limits.

In the absence of more cogent proof of his lofty assertions, Dr. Strauss appeals to the accordance of

his assertion with "the universal laws which govern the course of events, agreeing with all just philosophical conceptions and all credible experience." Here we have the same mistiness and confusion of thought, to say nothing of the grammar, of which I have already complained. In the first place, what is intended by the appeal here to "the universal laws which govern the course of events?" That there are such laws every one admits; but how these laws prove Dr. Strauss's assertion that God never interferes with the course of events, does not very clearly appear. It may be very certain that the course of events is *usually* allowed to flow on in obedience to certain laws, and yet it may be perfectly true that He who appointed these laws may interfere, when he sees meet, to suspend or set aside, for a longer or a shorter time, any one of them. The one assertion surely does not logically exclude the other; and when Dr. Strauss, therefore, adduces the former as if it rendered impossible the latter, he is guilty of a blunder, which says little for his powers of accurate reasoning. In the next place, what is intended by his assertion being in agreement with "just philosophical conceptions?" This is vagueness itself. Such an assertion may mean anything or nothing. On every word of it we might raise a demand for explanation. "Just philosophical conceptions!" Conceptions of what? "Philosophical conceptions!" Of what sort precisely are these? "Just philosophical conceptions!"

Amid the varied systems of philosophy which are contesting the supremacy, *which* is entitled to bear away the palm of alone dictating conceptions that are just? All here is left dark and shapeless. Is there design in this, that the author might seem to say something where he knew that he had nothing to the point to utter? Or is it merely the loose utterance of an ill-disciplined understanding, that imposes upon itself by words without knowledge? Be this as it may, of one thing we may rest comfortably assured, that whatever the dreamy and fantastic philosophy of which Dr. Strauss is understood to be a disciple, may pronounce on the subject of miracles, a belief in these is not incompatible with *all* philosophy, seeing it found place in the minds of such philosophers as Bacon, Newton, Leibnitz, and Locke, to say nothing of others in more recent times, whose speculations will be found guiding the researches of generations to whom the school of Hegel will be known merely as one of the extravagances of the past.

Once more, when Strauss appeals to "credible experience" as sustaining his assertion, we must again ask to what it is that he refers. Does he mean the experience of the witnesses, or the experience of an individual like himself, or the experience of the race? If he intend the first, then has he uttered a mere idle truism, for, of course, unless their experience be "credible," we cannot believe what they assert on the ground of that ex-

perience, as to do so would be self-contradictory. If he intend the second, then we must remind him that the experience of no individual whatever can be set up as the standard and test of all historical truth. If he intend the third (which I presume he does) then he has given us just the old sophism of Hume in a less ingenious shape than it appears in the writings of that great master of philosophical jugglery. No miracle has ever taken place, says Dr. Strauss, because it accords with the experience of the race to say so. A miracle, says Hume, can never be proved to have happened, because the universal experience of the race is against it. The one position is but the repetition of the other, only with more of caution and logical precision on the part of the Scottish than on the part of the German sceptic; and one answer, which needs not to be a long one, will serve for both.

In the *first* place, this famous argument is, after all, but a begging of the question. It assumes in the premises what it pretends to prove in the conclusion. For to affirm that miracles contradict universal experience, and to affirm that they have never occurred, are identical propositions. Nothing can be more plain than if at any time a miracle has been witnessed, such an event is not incompatible with universal experience, because it accords with the experience of those who witnessed it; so that to affirm that miracles are opposed to the experience of the race, is just, in other words, to assert

that no miracle has ever been witnessed. But this is the very thing to be proved, and, consequently, when the opponent of miracles proposes to reject those narrated in the Gospels, on the ground that they contradict universal experience, his argument simply resolves itself into the identical proposition, "These miracles never happened, because miracles never have happened." When, for instance, Strauss says "that narratives of angels and of devils, of their appearing in human shape, and interfering with human concerns, cannot possibly be received as historical," because men have had no experience of such apparitions, his reasoning plainly is, that the narratives in question must be regarded as fictitious because they state what never happened; and when his reason for asserting that they never happened is required, he has no reply to give but just that the experience of the race is ignorant of them; which is, in other words, simply to affirm that no man ever witnessed such apparitions because no man ever witnessed them. When fairly analyzed, then, this appeal to the experience of the race as an argument against miracles, turns out to be one of the paltriest sophisms with which a dexterous word-master ever tried to cajole unsuspecting readers.

But, *secondly*, this argument against the credibility of miracles is suicidal. It is an appeal to testimony for the purpose of proving that testimony is not to be trusted to. For, in adducing the universal experience of the race, the infidel adduces a crite-

rion, the whole solidity of which rests upon testimony, inasmuch as no man can possibly ascertain the experience of other men in all ages and in all places, but by testimony. Can anything, then, be more preposterous than to bring forward this for the purpose of setting aside statements which rest upon the very same kind of evidence on which this criterion itself is built? The miraculous events of our Saviour's history are certified to us by testimony of the highest and most unimpeachable kind; but the infidel says he must reject them because no testimony can establish assertions which do not fall in with what testimony informs us is the experience of the race. According to this, testimony is adequate to the establishing of the rule, but it is impotent to establish the exception. We may reasonably accept testimony, to prove that the laws of nature were the same in Judea eighteen hundred years ago as they are in this country at the present day; but we must not accept testimony, even of the most cogent kind, to prove that cases did occur in which, for great and necessary purposes, certain of these laws were temporarily suspended by the power of God. Can anything be more capricious than this? Why should we believe the one thing on testimony, and not the other? Is it because the former accords with our own experience, while the latter does not? If this be said, it will show that after all it is not the universal experience of the race, but his own experience, or, at any rate, that of his own age and

country, which the infidel would set up as the criterion by which alone historical credibility is to be tested. He, in fact, proposes to accept or reject testimony just as it affirms or contradicts what he already knows from the experience of himself and those around him. To a proposal so unreasonable in itself, and so opposed to all the interests of knowledge, no man of intelligence can give his assent.

From these, which may be regarded as the more philosophical of the objections against the credibility of miracles, I pass to one of a more practical nature, which has recently been much urged as affecting more particularly the narratives of the four evangelists. I allude to that which bases an argument from the rejection of these narratives on the alleged *discrepancies* which exist among them. "An account," says Strauss, "which shall be regarded as historically valid, must neither be inconsistent with itself, nor in contradiction with other accounts." This is one of the canons which that writer lays down at the outset of his attack upon the Gospels, as furnishing criteria by which we should be guided in judging of their historical veracity. Every one, however, must see that as thus enunciated by him, it is utterly useless, from the vagueness of the terms in which it is expressed. Before we can even try to apply it, we must have it brought into a more definite shape—we must know precisely what is meant by a narrative being "con-

sistent with itself," and especially we must know what "other accounts" are to be compared with it as tests of its credibility. When it is said that "a narrative, to be historically valid, must not be inconsistent with itself," the demand may have reference either to consistency of opinion, or to consistency of representation, or to consistency of statement, or to consistency of style; and it is easy to see that the worth of the canon as a test of historical validity would be estimated very differently, according as one or other of these significations was adopted. An historian may not be a man of very settled opinions, and yet he may be a most faithful narrator of facts. A writer who is fond of presenting his subject pictorially, may not always preserve harmony and consistency in his pictures, and yet the general truthfulness of his narrative be very little affected thereby. In a lengthened work, the author may have failed to preserve throughout perfect uniformity of style and manner, and yet this, instead of impeaching his credibility, may rather confirm it, as it may be the result of his fidelity in following the sources from which his materials are drawn. The only case in which want of consistency can be urged against the credibility of an author, is where he has indulged in statements on points of fact which contradict each other. Of course, where a witness first says one thing, and then affirms the opposite, his testimony must, in that particular, be rejected; and it cannot be denied, that in such a

case a general suspicion would be cast over his whole statements, as those of a man who could either deliberately affirm what he knew to be false, or was too ignorant or indolent to discriminate the real from the fictitious. In this sense, then, but in this sense only, is the canon a sound one, that a narrative, to possess historical validity, must not be inconsistent with itself.

The other part of Strauss's canon is, "that if the narrative is to be regarded as historically valid, it must not be in contradiction with other accounts." This is, if possible, still less definite than the former. "Other accounts!" *What* other accounts? The author surely cannot mean *any* other accounts; for this, if applied generally, would expose the most truthful history that was ever written to discredit, if it so happened that some nameless chronicler or some party scribbler had given a different version of the story. He can only mean such other accounts as possess *equal* claims to credibility with the one in question. But even in this case his criterion requires to be greatly modified and conditioned. If we would proceed wisely, and on solid ground, in this matter, we must attend to such considerations as the following: 1. If there are only *two* accounts of the same transaction, and the one of these contradicts the other, the only conclusion to which we are entitled to come is, that one or other of them must be false; we have no right to reject both as not worthy of belief; one of them may be true; and

our business is to hold the point in reserve until some further evidence shall enable us to determine it. 2. If there are *more* accounts than two, and if the majority concur in their statements, the fair presumption is, that the fact happened as stated by them, and unless there be circumstances in the position, the opportunities, or the character of the parties, which go to counterbalance this presumption, we must receive this statement as in all probability the correct one; at any rate, we are not entitled, merely on the ground of such a difference, to reject the whole as fictitious. 3. A distinction must be made between the essentials of a statement, and the circumstantial or accidental details of it; and when the witnesses concur in the former, we cannot allow their differing more or less in the latter, to cast suspicion on their statement as wholly fabulous. 4. When lengthened narratives from independent witnesses agree in the main, the fact that they differ from each other, though it be irreconcilably, on one or two points, cannot be justifiably held as destroying the entire historical validity of their narratives.

To these considerations I am persuaded every man of intelligence and sobriety will yield assent, as absolutely necessary to be taken into account before we apply any such criterion of historical validity as that on which Dr. Strauss has proposed to set aside the credibility of the four evangelists. Without such qualifications this criterion would bring the entire historical literature of the world into danger

of being consigned to the regions of romance and fable; for it seems to be incident to man that in narrating historical events, hardly a case occurs in which two or more writers, however candid and intelligent, are found perfectly and absolutely to agree in every particular. Indeed, so much is this the case, that such agreement would only beget a suspicion that the concurrent narrators were not independent witnesses, but had borrowed from some common source.

When the proposed criterion is thus brought into a shape in which it can be fairly applied to historical writings generally, there can be no objection to its being applied with as much rigour as may be deemed necessary to the narratives of the four evangelists. These claim to be authentic narratives of facts, and they must abide the tests by which the historical truthfulness of all such narratives is to be ascertained. If it be found that they cannot abide it—if the discrepancies between them be such as to cast suspicions upon the veracity of their entire statements—or, if what they agree in stating be contradicted by the concurrent testimony of contemporary writers, then let such an award be given against them as would be given against any other historical writings similarly circumstanced. But let them not be condemned upon a canon which is founded in no solid reason, and which would go to invalidate all historical writings, both ancient and modern.

Now, that there are certain apparent discrepancies in the narratives of the four evangelists, is at once

admitted; and it is also admitted that some of their statements do not appear to accord with the accounts of other credible writers. But I deny that these are of such a kind as to impair their validity as historical documents. For, in the *first* place, of these discrepancies many are only apparent, and are removed by a more carefnl or extended scrutiny of the narratives; 2dly. Of the statements in which the evangelists differ from contemporary writers, some are of a kind in which *they* must be regarded as being of much higher authority than those from whom they differ, while others relate to matters regarding which our information is so imperfect, that it is more than probable that, were all the facts known, the difference would entirely disappear, more especially as on several points a more accurate examination of documents has proved that the statement of the evangelists is undoubtedly correct. 3dly. Of the discrepancies between the evangelists themselves, none are of such a kind as to affect the substance of the narrative, but relate exclusively to mere incidental details; so that even where they cannot be removed, the historical validity of the narrative remains unimpeached. In a question, then, relating merely to the credibility of the documents, the existence of such discrepancies cannot be held as any reason for withholding our confidence from these narratives as a whole.*

* Apparet nos non debere arbitrari mentiri quemquam, si pluribus rem, quam audierunt vel viderunt. reminiscentibus, non

I have now gone through the objections which are commonly urged against the authenticity of the narratives of miraculous events contained in the Gospels, especially as these objections appear in the more recent productions of the infidel school. Without entering into minute details, I am not aware of having passed over any point of importance in these objections. The result has been, I trust, to evince that they possess no real force; that they are either

eodum modo atque eisdem verbis, eadam tamen res fuerit explicata, ut sive mutatur ordo verborum; sive alia pro aliis, quæ tamen idem valeant, verba proferantur; sive aliquid quod vel recordanti non occurrit, vel quod ex aliis quæ dicuntur possit intelligi minus dicatur; sive aliorum quæ magis dicere statuit narrandorum gratiâ, ut congruus temporis modus sufficiat, aliquid sibi non totum explicandum, sed ex parte tangendum quisque suscipiat.—AUGUSTINE, De consensu Evangell. l. ii, c. 12. In this passage the great bishop of Hippo specifies *four* cases in which discrepancies may occur among narrators of the same event, without their credibility being thereby impaired, namely, 1. Where a different arrangement of words is followed; 2. Where different words of the same import are used; 3. Where something is omitted because it did not recur to the memory of the narrator, or may be gathered from something he has narrated; 4. Where, for the sake of narrating in due order of time, such things as his plan led him chiefly to dwell upon, each has refrained from fully explaining something, and contented himself with partially touching it. Under one or other of these, almost all the discrepancies of the evangelists may be ranked. But even supposing their discrepancies far beyond such as these, who would, on the ground of this, adjudge them to be liars? or what events could stand such a test of credibility? Comp. Whately's Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Buonaparte, and the valuable illustrations collected by Tholuck in the concluding chapter of his *Glaubwürdigkeit der Evangelischen Geschichte*, of which a condensed view is given by Dr. Beard in his Voices of the Churches, p. 164. ff.

mere vague surmises, or palpable fallacies, or unfair assertions; and that, consequently, they ought not to be allowed to stand for a moment in the way of our yielding full credit to the miraculous portions of the Evangelical History.

III.

I have thus established one point in my argument from the miracles narrated in the history of Christ, namely, that such events actually did occur as narrated. I have now to show that the occurrence of such events, under the circumstances in which they did occur, affords evidence that the religion of Jesus Christ is divine. Here, the first point to be cleared, respects the meaning of the term *miraculous*, as applied to these events.

"To discourse of miracles," says Locke, "without defining what one means by the word, 'miracle,' is to make a show, but in effect to talk of nothing."* That I may not fall under this censure, I shall endeavour to furnish a precise answer to the question, What is a miracle?

To those who would conduct their investigations on scientific principles, this question resolves itself into an inquiry into the nature of those events recorded in Scripture which are styled miraculous. As it is not from miracles in the abstract that we are to argue the truth of Christianity, but from these concrete facts in the sacred history, and especially

* Disc. on Miracles, Works, vol. iii, p. 451, folio edition.

those of them which are found in the history of Jesus Christ, it is not by any *a priori* definition of miracle that we ought to bind ourselves, but only by such a one as shall be given us by a fair illation from the phenomena.

Now, when we examine the miracles recorded in the Gospels, we shall find that, in respect of the miraculous element (or call it, for the present, only the wonderful element) in them, they may be arranged into three classes. The *first* of these will comprehend such acts as the feeding of the multitudes in the wilderness, the curing of blindness by the application of saliva to the eyes, the raising of the ruler's daughter by taking hold of her hand, &c. In these we see means used, in themselves more or less adapted to produce the end attained; and yet the whole transaction strikes us as marvellous. Why? Because we know that according to the ordinary course of nature the means used were quite inadequate, *in the circumstances*, to produce the resultant effect. The effect was not one beyond being attained by the use of means; the means suited for the attainment of it are such as Christ used; but, in the cases specified, the *disproportion* between the means used and the result attained is so immense, that we are forced to conclude that some power, far beyond what resides in them, must have been at work to produce it, and that this power must be *superhuman*, for that it is perfectly certain no man can produce an effect by means so

immensely disproportionate. Here, then, a miracle means a sensible effect produced in connexion with the use of means, of themselves so utterly insufficient to produce it, that we are constrained to refer it to a superhuman power, either resident in the performer, or acting through him.

The *second* class consists of such acts as the healing of inveterate diseases by a word, the curing of persons at a distance instantaneously, &c. These acts, in themselves, are such as may take place through natural causes; but as performed by our Lord, in the cases recorded, they become marvellous, because they were performed *without* the use of natural causes,—there being no causal connexion between the utterance of a word and the cure of a severe malady, especially where the party cured is at a distance from the party operating the cure. Here the effect is, of necessity, ascribed by us to some power residing in, or operating through the person who produces it; and as we know that no such power resides in ordinary men, we ascribe to this person something extraordinary, something superhuman. A miracle, then, in this case, is a sensible effect produced without the use of means, and arguing, therefore, superhuman power in the party performing it.

The *third* class includes such acts as the raising of the dead, the becoming suddenly invisible to a multitude of persons, and passing unseen through the midst of them, the walking upon the sea, the

casting out of devils, &c. These acts strike us at once as marvellous, because they are such as never are produced by natural causes under any circumstances; and not only so, but before they can be produced, natural causes which we know to be continually operating must be suspended, in order that they may be produced. In this case, then, we not only have a conviction of the superhuman, but also of the supernatural; and a miracle becomes a sensible effect produced by supernatural power.

We have thus arrived at the conception of three distinct kinds of miracles; it remains to inquire, What is the element *common* to them all, in virtue of which they are marvellous? And, in answer to this, it is obvious to reply, that the common element lies in this, that all are brought to pass by a power not existing in the ordinary course of nature. In miracles of the first and second class, this power is so manifested that we are constrained to regard it as *superhuman;* and, in miracles of the third class, we pronounce it not only superhuman, but *supernatural.*

Proceeding on these grounds, we are entitled to define a miracle on the lowest possible estimate that can be taken of it, as an act which takes place out of the ordinary course of nature, and which is attributable only to a superhuman energy exerted for its production.

But if a miracle be the production of an agency which is superhuman, it will follow, that it is the

product of an agency which is *divine*. For, 1. All miracles proceed upon the assumption that there is a God. This is taken for granted on the part of the performer of the miracle, and it is acknowledged on the part of those for whose conviction it is performed. Deny this, and the miracle becomes useless for the purpose for which it is adduced. "There never was," says Bacon, "a miracle wrought by God to convert an atheist, because the light of nature might have led him to confess a God; but miracles are designed to convert idolaters and the superstitious who have acknowledged a deity, but erred in his adoration; because no light of nature extends to declare the will and true worship of God."* 2. The Biblical miracles were all performed in the name of the one living and true God. They were a solemn appeal to him to give his testimony on the side of truth. Now, it is possible that such an appeal, if rash and unauthorized, might remain *unanswered;* but if we believe that God is, we cannot for a moment believe that he would allow any of his creatures, good or bad, to answer an appeal made to him *in such a way as to sanction falsehood and confirm delusion.* When, therefore, such an appeal *is* answered by the occurrence of some superhuman effect, the conclusion to which we cannot but come is, that the agent of that effect is God. But, 3. Apart from the Bible, what do we *know* of any intelligent powers between man and God? It is

* Advancement of Learning, book iii, c. 2.

only from its revelations that we become acquainted with the existence of angels and spirits; for though tradition or conjecture may have impressed men's minds with the feeling that some such intermediate beings *may be*, nothing like knowledge of this can exist until the Bible has been received and read. But this presumes that the Bible has *already* established its claims; and consequently, nothing can be more preposterous, while these claims are yet in dispute, than to introduce any such element of doubt into the investigation. Such an element must in that case be purely *conjectural;* and it is a transgression of all sound principles of investigation to make use of conjecture in such an inquiry. One of the very first laws of the inductive method is that "no other causes of things should be admitted than such as are both real and sufficient to explain the phenomena."* This is Newton's rule, which he laid down for himself, and which all succeeding philosophers have concurred in lauding and following. "This is," says Dr. Reid, "a golden rule; it is the true and proper test by which what is sound and solid in philosophy may be distinguished from what is hollow and vain."† In obedience to this rule, Newton refused all conjectural solutions of the phenomena presented to his observation; contented rather to remain in ignorance than to go beyond the region

* Causas rerum naturalium, non plures admitti debere, quam quæ et veræ sint, et earum phænomenis explicandis sufficiant.—*Newton, Princ.*, lib. iii, *sub. init.*

† On the Intellectual Powers, Essay i, c. 3.

of real causes for an explanation. "I frame not hypotheses," is his simple and dignified reason for refusing to attempt to assign a cause for gravitation, the effects of which he was the first accurately to describe; "I frame not hypotheses . . . for hypotheses, whether metaphysical, or physical, or of occult qualities, or mechanical, have no place in experimental philosophy."* In the spirit of this greatest of philosophers, and in obedience to the rule he has so perspicuously laid down, we must denounce all attempts to account for a miracle by referring it to the agency of angels or devils, as irrelevant and unphilosophical. A miracle comes before us on the platform of natural theology; there, and there alone can we fairly encounter it; and as there we know of no intelligent beings but man and God, when a man presents himself to us and does, in the name of God, what we know no mere man can do, the only conclusion open to us is to admit that God is working by him. To ascribe the miracle to God is to assign a *real* and *adequate cause* for the phenomenon: "to raise an argument or answer an objection from hidden powers of nature or magic is," as that acutest of thinkers, Bishop Berkeley, has said, "groping in the dark."† With the former conclusion true

* Hypotheses non fingo. . . . Hypotheses seu metaphysicæ, seu physicæ, seu qualitatum occultarum, seu mechanicæ in philosophia experimentali locum non habent.—*Princ.*, lib. iii, *prop. fin.*

† Alciphron: or, The Minute Philosopher, dial. vi, vol. ii, p. 116. Lond., 1732.

philosophy rests satisfied, nor will she accept any other as legitimate.*

Even supposing, then, that all we could say of the miracles of Christ is, that they indicate superhuman power, we should be constrained to refer them to God, in whose name they were performed, as the doer of them. But a large number—the majority of Christ's miracles, were such as to indicate not merely superhuman but supernatural

* I confess I am surprised to find such a writer as Dr. Chalmers contending that "it does appear *ultra vires* on the part of man to affirm of every miracle that, because a miracle, it must proceed from the immediate finger or fiat of God. Is it," he goes on to ask, "in the spirit either of Butler or Bacon, to make this confident affirmation?"—*Evidences of Christianity*, Works, vol. iii, p. 378. Now, surely when we have excluded all real causes that we know, which are inadequate to produce the result, and have illated a real cause which is adequate to it, we have proceeded with strict and punctual closeness not only in the spirit, but after the rule of Bacon. It is those who conjecture a cause which is not known to be real or to be adequate, who sin against the spirit and law of the experimental philosophy. "But," says Dr. Chalmers, "that very Bible, which stands pillared on its own miraculous evidences, affirms the existence of such beings, [powerful and wicked spirits,] and actuated, too, by a mischievous policy, the object of which is to enthral and destroy our species." P. 375. And he contends, that having this information, we are bound to consider how this affects the claims of miracles to be products of divine agency. Now, I have only to ask in reply, whether we are bound to do this *before* or *after* the Bible has been pillared on its own miraculous evidence? Not after, surely, for this would be to invalidate the very evidence on which we say the Bible stands pillared; not before, certainly, for until we have set the Bible on its pillar we have no right to ask any one to rest upon what it reveals. Obviously in either case our reasoning would involve a fallacy. It follows, that if neither before nor after is this to be done, then *not at all.*

power. They were acts which no being, subject to the laws of nature, and bound to obey them in the producing of sensible results, could have performed. However gifted any creature may be, and whatever intelligence he may possess of the occult powers of nature, there are certain bounds in this department which we *know* no mere creature can pass. We know that he cannot produce a natural result without the use of natural means. We know that he cannot suspend any of the fixed laws that regulate the events of nature, without calling into operation some sensible agency by which such laws are overpowered. A skilful chemist may, by certain applications, render his finger insensible to the action of fire; but no chemist can, without adhibiting such applications, merely by the word of his mouth, compel fire to refrain from burning. An experienced physician may detect signs of life, and by appropriate measures restore animation to a body apparently dead; but no physician can, merely by a touch of his hand or an utterance of his voice, recall to life one who is really dead. When such things are done, we know and are sure that the finger of God has been there. There may be much in nature that we are ignorant of; there may be laws regulating the world of matter, of which we have no information or suspicion; but with the fullest acknowledgment of our possible ignorance in this respect, we nevertheless take our stand with unhesitating confidence on what we are not ignorant of, and reason from

that. I do not know all that the progress of science shall enable men to do; but I turn to the raising of Lazarus, or the curing of the paralytic, and I say, Science will *never* enable any man to do *that*. Man is but the minister and interpreter of nature;* he can command her only by obeying her.† Show me a man who commands without obeying; show me one who suspends and counteracts nature by a word; and without needing to know anything beyond the fact. I bow my head and say, "Of a truth God is there."

The conclusion at which we arrive, then, is that the miracles of Jesus Christ were such acts as only divine power can accomplish. But as these acts did not differ in essence from the other miracles recorded in Scripture, we may generalize the definition so as to embrace all the miracles, and say, that *a miracle is a sensible effect produced by the immediate power of God.*‡

IV.

Our Lord, then, while on earth performed many works of such a kind as only divine power can accomplish:—What bearing has this on the pretensions of his religion to be accepted as true?

Now, the first thing to be looked at here is, what it is that a miracle is competent to prove. On this point it is the more important that we should seek precise conceptions, because both on the side of be-

* Homo Naturæ Minister ac Interpres.—*Bacon, Nov. Org., Aph.* 1.
† Natura non nisi parendo vincitur.—*Ibid., Aph.* 3.
‡ See Appendix, Note D.

lievers and on the side of infidels, there has been considerable confusion of thought, and, consequently, of reasoning regarding it.

Let it be understood, then, that a miracle of whatever kind, however striking or however strange, cannot afford direct proof of the truth of any doctrine or statement. Infidels have often asked with a sneer, What connexion is there between power and truth? or, How can the mere display of supernatural power prove the truth of any position in theology or any fact in history? Now, the proper answer to this is, that there is no direct connexion between truth and power whereby the former may receive immediate support from the latter, nor is a miracle offered as if it were thereby intended to affirm such a connexion. What a miracle is designed to prove, and what alone it is, *per se*, competent to prove, is not the truth of the doctrine, but *the divine commission of the teacher of that doctrine.* The message comes to us as from God. The truth of its contents is thus avowedly rested on the divine veracity; and what the miracle is adduced to prove is, that the divine veracity is actually pledged to the doctrine. The connexion between the miracle and the doctrine is analogous to the connexion between the signature of a letter and the truthfulness of what that letter contains. The signature, if genuine, proves only that the letter was written by a certain party; the truthfulness of its contents must depend upon the character of the writer. In like manner,

the miracle, if real, proves that the person who performs it has come from God; and on the character of God—his unerring wisdom and perfect veracity—rests the truth of what that person teaches. A miracle is offered as the sign-manual of God, as the peculiar and unforgeable token that God is there; and it is offered as the proper and the only proper evidence that the message, to support which it has been performed, is a message authorized, sanctioned, and verified by God.

It is of importance, in reference to this part of the subject, to keep in mind that it is only as a teacher comes to promulgate something *new*, that he needs, or can with propriety appeal to, miracles in proof of his divine commission. A man who only enforces doctrines or institutions already accredited, *starts* from the point to which it is the design of miracles to bring men. A miracle is always prospective, never retrospective in its sanction. Thus, it was no part of the design of the miracles wrought by Christ to authenticate the commission of Moses or any of the ancient prophets; nor was it the object of any of the Biblical miracles to procure respect to the doctrines of natural religion. The miracle-worker invariably takes his stand upon the ground of what is already accepted by those whom he would teach, and it is for the sake of his new, his peculiar institutions alone, that he offers miraculous evidence of his divine commission. It may to some, perhaps, appear that this is too obvious to be

insisted on; and yet, from overlooking it, much confusion of thought and reasoning has been introduced into the discussion of this subject. To this source, I conceive, may be traced the opinion contended for even by such men as Samuel Clarke, Hoadly, Chalmers, and others, that before we can receive a miracle as evidence of a divine commission, we must be satisfied that the doctrine it is adduced to authenticate is such as God would sanction. Now, if by this is meant the *new* doctrine brought by the teacher, the opinion is manifestly fallacious; for it rests upon a mere begging of the question, the doctrine being first assumed in order to authenticate the miracle, for the sake of making the miracle afterward authenticate the doctrine. If, on the other hand, all that is meant is, that the messenger must acknowledge the fundamental and universally accredited doctrines of natural religion, (and this is what the more exact thinkers who have embraced this opinion do mean,*) then it becomes clearly irrelevant to the subject on hand; for as the design of miracles is in no case to authenticate the doctrines of natural religion, these being invariably and of necessity presupposed in every case of miracle, it is a mere waste of words to contend that the miracle derives any portion of its use or weight as a miracle from the accordanee with these of the

* See Clarke's Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation, p. 230, 10th edition.

doctrine taught by him who performs it. Surely if the doctrines of natural religion form no part of the message which the miracle is wrought to sanction, it must be plain to all that it cannot be from the relation of the teacher to these, that any portion of the validity of his miracle is derived! As respects the Bible, it is undoubtedly true that its agreement with the principles of natural religion and morality forms part of the general evidence in its favour; but it is not on this that the evidence of the miracles depends; these form a *separate* and *independent* branch of evidence, and no more rest upon the former than does any other part of that cumulative proof by which the claims of the Bible are substantiated.

The chief use of miracles, then, is to authenticate the party performing them as one divinely commissioned to teach men. They doubtless, besides this, serve to attract attention and prepare men's minds to be impressed with the lesson which the teacher is about to unfold;* and, as in the case of the Lord's miracles, they may also set forth as in symbol the peculiar character and tendency of the doctrines to be taught:† but their supreme design and use is to secure for the messenger the homage of men as one

* As Foster quaintly says, "Having rung the great bell of the universe, the sermon to follow must be extraordinary."—*Life*, vol. i, p. 173.

† See Lawson's Sermons on the Miracles of Jesus Christ, considered as illustrative of the Doctrines of the Gospel, Camb., 1835. Wardlaw on Miracles, p. 303.

sent to them from God. Let us apply this to the case before us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared on the earth as the teacher of a religion which, in many of its aspects and institutes, was *new*. It was needful, therefore, if his religion was to be accepted by men as divine, that he should perform miracles in proof that he had come from God. Now, we find from his own words that it was with this specific design that he did the mighty works which the evangelists have recorded. "The works," said he, "that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.... If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." John x, 25, 37, 38. No words could more plainly describe the design of our Lord's miracles than these. He did the works to prove the divinity of his commission, and mediately the divinity of his instructions. And so they were understood by those who witnessed and fairly construed them. "Rabbi," said Nicodemus, speaking in the name of the more candid portion of his countrymen, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." John iii, 2.

The conclusion which the ruler of the Jews enunciates in this passage, is one which will commend itself to the common sense of the race. Assuming

the divine existence—assuming that this universe is the creature of God, and is sustained by his power and wisdom—and assuming that, being benevolent as well as wise and powerful, it is highly probable that God will convey his will to men in the form of a message; what, we may ask, is the kind of evidence which would furnish valid proof that any given message had actually come from Him?—what kind of sign would it be proper for him to give and for us to receive in order that we might be convinced that such was really the case? To this question I think every man's common sense will be ready to answer, The proper evidence would be for the bearer of the message to do something which we are quite sure only God's power can effect. Besides this, there is really no other way in which he could directly convince us that God was with him. He might be bold in assertion, ingenious in argument, persuasive in eloquence; but all this would not convince us that he spoke the words of God, unless he submitted to our senses some works which only one with whom God is can do. "Revelation," says a distinguished Italian philosopher recently deceased, "presupposes divine inspiration in its preachers. Now, this being on the one hand a psychological, an internal fact, and on the other a supernatural one common to very few, its reality cannot be shown so as to be credited, except by the aid of other facts equally supernatural, but outward, public, and apprehensible, mediately or im-

mediately, by all men. Hence it is apparent that adequate proof of a divine revelation cannot consist in ideas, because natural ideas cannot demonstrate a fact above nature such as is the extraordinary infusion of incomprehensible truths; nor in natural facts which are incompetent to certify and place on a solid basis a succession invisible, and of a different kind; but that it must emerge from supernatural events which shall express sensibly and indubitably the internal correspondent fact, and so become *signs* of its reality."* By this standard, then, may all pretensions to revelation be fairly tried. If the man can do the work—if he can give the proper sign, we cannot but admit his claims; if he shall be found unable to do any such work, we cannot but hold his pretensions unproved, however otherwise supported.

Now, a *miracle* is such a work. It is something which only the power of God can effect. Hence, whenever a miracle is performed by a human being, it becomes a sign that God is with the party performing it; and as God would not lend his sanction to one who was not commissioned and qualified to convey to men his will, we pass, by a very brief but firm transition, to the conclusion that a message so sanctioned *must* be divinely true.

This, then, was what our Lord did. He wrought

* Gioberti, Teorica del Sovranaturale, o sia Discorso sulla convenienza della Religione rivelata colla mente umana e col progresso civile della nazioni, § 131. Torino, 1850.

miracles in proof of his divine commission, and when any challenged his pretensions, it was to his *works* that he referred them for evidence that they were just and true. This was treating men like intelligent and reasoning creatures. It was asking them to believe on evidence which commends itself to the common sense of mankind as the only evidence adequate to prove what he submitted for their belief.

As those, therefore, whose belief reposes upon evidence, and who would hold it alike unworthy of a rational being to believe without evidence, and to refuse belief when the proper and due evidence is afforded, it becomes us to recognise in Jesus Christ a divinely-accredited teacher—to receive his doctrines as holy and true—and to hail the religion he has taught as bearing on it the stamp and authority of Heaven.

CHAPTER III.

ARGUMENT FROM THE PREDICTIONS UTTERED BY CHRIST AS RECORDED BY THE EVANGELISTS.

From the consideration of our Lord's personal character and of his public appearance as a worker of miracles, I proceed to consider the aspect in which his biographers have presented him as *a Prophet or Predicter of future events.*

In the reports which they give to us of the sayings and discourses of their Master, the evangelists have preserved to us a great number of statements made by him of a *predictive* kind. These are not delivered with the formality of oracles, but occur in the course of conversations which he is reported to have held with those around him, or form part of more lengthened addresses to his disciples or to the multitude. A large portion of them are of a personal nature, having reference to his own prospects or those of his disciples, and as these undoubtedly were, for the most part at least, *recorded* after the events to which they relate occurred, while some of them are of such a kind that the fact of their fulfilment cannot be proved apart from the testimony of the individuals who record them, they are not such as we can successfully use in an argu-

ment like the present, however valuable they may be for other purposes. Besides these, however, there are several distinct predictions by our Lord recorded in the Gospels to which this objection will not apply; for they were recorded before the event, and are of such a kind that we can both give reasons for believing that the prediction must have been uttered by him, and show, from independent sources, that the event to which it relates actually occurred. Confining ourselves to these, we are in circumstances to pursue a fair and legitimate line of argument from this recorded feature of our Saviour's history to the truth of that religion which bears his name.

In endeavouring to develop this argument, I shall pursue the following course:—

1. I shall select a few of our Lord's predictions of the class referred to, and show, from authentic sources, the correspondence between the alleged prediction and the undoubted facts of history which it is said to have foretold.

2. I shall show reason for our believing that Jesus Christ actually did deliver these predictions as recorded by his historians. And,

3. I shall urge the evidence accruing from this source in favour of the divinity of Christianity.

I.

In selecting from our Lord's predictions, it is not necessary for our present purpose that I should ad-

duce more than a very few; for the strength of the argument from prophecy does not depend so much on the *number* of the predictions, as on the *character* of the announcement itself, and the *amount* of *correspondence* between it and the event by which it is said to be fulfilled. I shall, therefore, content myself with citing only three classes of our Lord's predictions.

The first relates to *the success of his cause in the world.* Respecting this he foretold, in the plainest terms, that the Church or society which he had established was founded on a rock, and that the gates of hell should never prevail against it. Matt. xvi, 18. Now, it is of no concern to us at present to inquire what it is that Christ in this passage denominates a rock—whether Peter, or Peter's confession that he was the Christ, the Son of God, or Christ himself; whichever of these we adopt as the true reference, the important point remains, that that on which Christ declares his Church to be founded is a *rock*—something solid, stable, and permanent. As little does it concern us to determine *precisely* here what our Lord intended by "the gates of hell;" for all are agreed that by this designation he must have meant the most violent and dangerous form of opposition that could be brought against his cause. Our Lord's meaning, then, is for our present purpose sufficiently determined. He here foretells, while as yet his Church had barely an existence on the earth, that he had placed it on so

solid and enduring a basis, that the most threatening forms of opposition should not succeed in overthrowing it.

But not only did Christ foretell the stability of his Church, he announced also its world-wide diffusion. "The gospel," said he, "shall be preached among all nations." Matt. xxiv, 14. An act of confidence and kindness done to him by a nameless female, he declared should be spoken of for a memorial of her "wheresoever the gospel should be preached throughout the whole world." Matt. xxvi, 13. The kingdom of heaven he likened to a grain of mustard-seed, which, though the smallest of all seeds, when it is sown in the earth becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; and to leaven, which a woman hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened. Matt. xiii, 31–33. And in full accordance with such predictions was the commission which he gave to his disciples to evangelize and to baptize all nations; at the same time assuring them of success, for he should be with them even unto the end of the world. Matthew xxviii, 19; Mark xvi, 15; Luke xxiv, 47.

Such are the anticipations which our Lord is represented by the evangelists as having taught his followers to cherish concerning the future success of his cause; and so far as the experience of the Church has yet gone, the event has amply justified the expectation. From very humble beginnings, the Church of Christ speedily grew into a large and

widely-extended body; and in spite of the most violent opposition from many quarters, and the severest trials of every kind, it has survived to the present day. We cannot, indeed, say that the predictions quoted have been fulfilled to their utmost extent; nor is this to be required, because as the period embraced by Christ within his announcements is commensurate with the duration of the world, it is only as the world verges toward its close that the entire fulfilment of such declarations can be looked for. But this we may say with confidence, that so far as things have already proceeded—so far as history has anything to say on this matter—the event has remarkably corresponded to the prediction. The Church, though assailed by the fiercest persecution from without, and often betrayed by the foulest treason from within, has never ceased to exist on this earth since Christ planted it; and as, before the close of the apostolic age, it had spread into nearly every part of the then known world, so, in more recent times, it has advanced to such a degree that there is hardly a nation on the earth's surface in whose speech the gospel is not preached; and, in an age of many books, the book of all others most numerously printed, most widely diffused, most extensively read, and most elaborately commented upon, is the book containing the record of Christ's life, and the development of Christ's doctrine.

Another class of predictions recorded by the evangelists, as uttered by our Lord, *respects the events*

which were to transpire between his death and the destruction of Jerusalem. These, he intimated, would be of a very remarkable kind.* Many false Christs should arise, coming in his name, so as to deceive many. There should be wars and rumours of wars, and commotions; nation should rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There should be famine, and pestilence, and earthquakes, and fearful sights and signs from heaven. And though he did not fix a precise date for the occurrence of these, (which would not have been in accordance with the genius of true prophecy, for which a certain degree of vagueness and obscurity is necessary, that it may not, by too great precision of detail, be liable to the charge of having led to its own fulfilment,) yet he intimated that they would happen within the lifetime of some who heard him speak, and that they would precede and usher in the destruction of Jerusalem. Now, with these predictions the events remarkably corresponded. 1. Shortly after our Lord's ascension multitudes of impostors arose among the Jews, as we learn from their own historian Josephus, and from others, who pretended to be deliverers sent from God to his people, and who led away great numbers of the populace to their destruction. "The whole land," Josephus tells us, "was overrun with magicians, seducers, and impostors, who drew the people after them in multi-

* Comp. Matt. xxiv, 24; Mark xiii, 22; Matt. xxiv, 6, 7; Mark xiii, 7, 8; Luke xxi, 9, 10, 11.

tudes into solitudes and deserts, to see the signs and miracles which they promised to show by the power of God."* Among these he mentions especially an Egyptian false prophet, who led thirty thousand men into the desert; and Theudas, who persuaded many to take their goods, and follow him to the Jordan, which he promised to divide for them by the power of God, so that they should go over dry-shod. We read also of Simon Magus, who gave himself out as the Son of God, and Dositheus, who appeared among the Samaritans as their Christ.† To such an extent had this species of deception proceeded, that the peace of the country was interrupted, and the Roman procurators felt it necessary to use force to put down those who were involved in it.‡ 2. Though, at the time when our Lord lived, it was a season of quiet and peace through the Roman empire, it was not long after his ascension till wars and rumours of wars, and commotions, spread confusion and dismay through its boundaries. Contentions for the imperial throne—insurrections in the provinces—contests between different cities and provinces in various parts of the empire, and especially in that in which Judea was placed, kept the minds of men in continual agitation, and afforded ample verification of our Lord's words. As Josephus succinctly sums up the whole: "Not only through Judea were there revolt and intestine war, but even

* Antiq. Jud., l. xx, c. 58, § 6. † Ibid., l. xx, c. 4, § 1.
‡ Josephus de Bell. Jud., l. ii, c. 13, § 4, 5.

in Italy itself; for Galba being slain in the midst of the Roman forum, Otho was created emperor, and entered into war with Vitellius, who affected also to reign."* 3. As our Lord had foretold, there were several famines, and pestilences—the usual concomitants of famine—during the period referred to. One mentioned in Acts xi, 28, and by all the Roman historians† of the time, occurred in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, and was severely felt at Jerusalem, where, Josephus says, many perished for want of food.‡ In another place, the same historian speaks of famine and pestilence as sent by God upon the Jews for their wickedness.§ Accounts are also preserved of several destructive earthquakes which occurred at this time in Asia Minor, in Crete, in Italy, by which much property was damaged, not a few lives lost, and great fear excited.‖ Nor were there wanting "fearful sights and signs from heaven," for both Josephus and Tacitus¶ concur in asserting that portents of the most unusual and startling kind were witnessed in different parts of the world, but

* De Bello Judaico, l. iv, c. 9, § 9.

† Comp. Suetonius in Claudio, c. 18; Tacitus, Annal., l. xii, c. 43; Aurelius Victor de Cæsaribus, c. 4; Euseb. Hist. Eccl., l. ii, c. 8.

‡ Antiq., l. xx, c. 2, § 6; c. iv, § 2.

§ De Bell. Jud., l. iv, c. 6, § 1.

‖ Philostratus in Vita Apollonii; Tacitus, Annal., l. xii, c. 43, 58; xv, 22, &c.; Seneca, Nat. Quæst., l. vi, c. 1; Suetonius in Galba, c. 18; Josephus de Bell. Jud., l. iv, c. 4, § 5.

¶ Josephus de Bell. Jud. Proem., § 11; l. vi, c. 5, § 3, &c.; Tacitus, Hist., l. v, c. 13.

especially in Judea. Had the statements referred to stood merely by themselves in the pages of these historians, they might have been contemned as exaggerations or as fictions, but when placed by the side of the predictions of Christ, they receive from these historical validity, while they in turn confirm the prophetical claims of the others; for in a case where there could neither be a common source of information, nor a borrowing from each other, such a correspondence can be accounted for only by admitting the truth of both.*

In this second class, then, of predictive utterances imputed to our Lord, we have the same close accordance between this announcement and the subsequent events, as in the former class.

A third class, and the only other I shall mention, embraces those declarations which our Lord uttered respecting *the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish polity.* These are full and minute. Not only did he unequivocally assure his disciples that Jerusalem should be destroyed, and that the destruction should be so entire that she should be laid even with the ground, and not one stone should be left upon another; but he specifically intimated that Jerusalem should be compassed with armies—that the abomination of desolation, *i. e.*, idolatrous ensigns belonging to the destroyers, should stand in the holy place—that the invaders should cast a trench or fortification around Jerusalem—and that

* See Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. i, p. 41.

they should thereby so enclose the city as to keep it in on every side. He also foretold the flight of the Christians out of the city before it was so encompassed, and the fearful miseries of those who were shut up in it, with the ultimate massacre of the Jews, and their dispersion into all nations.* With these predictions the event corresponded to the minutest particulars. The Roman general surrounded the holy city with his armies, and set up his idolatrous ensigns within the consecrated precincts. In the face of almost insuperable difficulties, he surrounded the city with a rampart so as to render escape from it at any point impossible.† Before this was accomplished, however, the Christians had, in a body, fled from the devoted city, and betaken themselves to the district beyond Jordan, where they were left untouched by the invaders.‡ Within the city the most frightful scenes were exhibited. False prophets uttered their delusive announcements of triumph and peace, while furious partisans filled the divided city with bloodshed, and mad fanaticism plundered the magazines and wasted the provisions on which the life of the besieged depended. Famine soon raged in its most merciless form, and led to the most frightful scenes of suffering, rapacity, and barbarity—scenes such

* Comp. Matt. xxiv, 1, 2, 15–22; Mark xiii, 1, 2, 14–23; Luke xxi, 20–24.

† Joseph. de Bell. Jud., l. v, c. 12, § 1, 2, and 3.

‡ Joseph. de B. J., l. ii, c. 19, § 6; l. iv, c. 8, § 2; Euseb. H. E., l. iii, c. 5.

as no other page in the world's history records, and from the narrative of which the reader turns with disgust and horror. At length the city was taken, and the fury of the besiegers expended itself in the unsparing slaughter of its miserable defenders, until, as Josephus says, the soldiers were weary with killing.

In other places, also, the same indiscriminate massacres took place, so that the same historian reckons that besides multitudes who were slain in the war, of whom no account was kept, there were destroyed by the Romans, in different places, which he mentions with the details belonging to each, of the Jews not fewer than one million three hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred and sixty persons.* Many thousands also were carried away into captivity, and dispersed among all nations; so that our Lord's prediction was literally fulfilled. Indeed, the narrative of Josephus reads almost like an expository comment on the words of Christ; and so close is the coincidence between them, that they have employed almost the very same words in giving a summary of the miseries of the Jews during the siege.† "There shall be," says Christ, "great tribulation, distress in the land, and wrath upon this people, such as was not from the beginning of the

* De Bell. Jud., l. vi, c. 9, § 3; l. ii, c. 14, § 9, &c.; l. iii, c. 2, § 2, &c.; l. iv, c. 1, § 10, &c.; l. vii, c. 9, § 4, &c.

† Com. de Bell. Jud., l. v, c. 10, § 3; c. 12, § 2; l. vi, c. 3, § 4; l. vii, c. 11, § 1; l. ii, c. 13, § 4.

creation which God created unto this time; no, nor shall ever be." "All the calamities," says Josephus,* "which had befallen any nation from the beginning of the world, were but small in comparison with those of the Jews." And, as Christ foretold, Jerusalem was utterly overthrown, and the temple totally destroyed. In spite of the attempts of the Roman general to save it, the temple was burned to the foundation; and, by his orders, the whole city with its walls was levelled with the ground, with the exception of three towers, which he caused to be left to show the strength of the fortifications, and as trophies of his victory. So entire was the destruction that Josephus introduces Eleazer as saying to the Jews who were besieged in the fortress of Masada, "What is become of our city which we believed to be inhabited by God? It is now demolished to the very foundation, and the only monument that is left of it is the camp of those who destroyed it, which is still pitched upon its ruins." Since then, Jerusalem has been trodden down of the Gentiles. Successively has it been in the possession of the Romans, the Saracens, the Seljuks, the Franks, and the Turks, while the descendants of its ancient possessors exist in it only by sufferance, and crouch in abject submission where their fathers reigned. So exact in every particular is the correspondence between the predictions ascribed to our Lord and the subsequent events, as estab-

* De Bell. Jud. Proem, § 4.

lished by the testimony of historians and the evidence of fact.*

II.

But here the question occurs, Did our Lord actually make these declarations? and if he did, are they entitled to be looked at in the light of prophecies, properly so called? I shall take the latter of these questions first.

A prophecy, in the proper acceptation of the term, is a declaration that some event or series of events shall take place at a period sufficiently distant to preclude the supposition of ordinary foresight or sagacity conjecturing its happening. It is necessary that the subject of the prophecy should be an event of such a kind that it may, after it has occurred, become the subject of historical narrative, otherwise it will be impossible to identify it with sufficient precision, so as to prove the fulfilment of the prediction. It is necessary also that it should be an occurrence of such a kind as that there is nothing in the existing state of affairs, or in the probable results of existing agencies, to suggest it to the mind of the prophet as likely to happen; else might it be attributed to that prescient skill which often enables men, within certain limits, to anticipate futurity, and be prepared for what is coming. And, in fine, the prophecy must be couched in terms which, without being so precise

* Newton on the Prophecies, Disserto. 18–21.

as to beget a suspicion that it is designed to secure its own fulfilment, shall be free from ambiguity; so that, though it may not be fully comprehended until after the fulfilment, it shall yet, when fulfilled, be found to possess but one meaning. Where these conditions are complied with, all will admit that a true and real prophecy has been uttered.

Now, assuming that our Lord did utter the predictions we have cited, it must be admitted that, according to these criteria, they must be held to be genuine prophecies. They all point to events of such a kind that it is perfectly competent for any one, looking at the records of subsequent history, to say, without hesitation, whether they have occurred or not. They were all delivered at a time sufficiently remote from the period of their fulfilment to put it beyond question that it was not mere sagacious conjecture that saw them in the shadows which they cast before them; while, at the time they were delivered, it was so utterly improbable, judging from existing circumstances and the ordinary course of events, that such things should ever come to pass, that no human foresight, however skilled in affairs, could have been guided to anticipate them. On the contrary, all human probability pointed to an opposite conclusion; and there can be no doubt that any worldly-wise man, hearing our Lord say such things, and looking at the probabilities of his sayings coming true, would have been ready to laugh him to scorn as a fantastic dreamer or a wild fanatic.

It is also quite manifest that there is no ambiguity about our Lord's predictions. In most of them the language is that of historical precision, there being no occasion for any obscurity where the fulfilment was to depend upon agencies not capable of being in the least degree influenced by the prediction, so as to aim at its fulfilment; and in those of them where the language is such as that persons who heard it before the fulfilment may have found it somewhat obscure; there is yet such a definiteness of description, that as soon as the fulfilment cast its full light upon the prediction, it could not but be seen that it meant this one thing, and could mean no other.

If, then, our Lord did utter these declarations, they must be regarded as prophecies in the true and proper sense of the term. Let us now inquire what reason we have for believing that he did utter them. And here I observe,

1. That, as our Lord appeared in this world claiming to be a messenger from God, it is extremely *probable* that he would deliver prophecies. This was what all God's messengers did, and the power to do this was one of the accredited credentials of their divine mission. There is nothing, therefore, antecedently improbable in what the evangelists have thus represented our Lord as doing; on the contrary, it is exactly what we should have expected of him as one claiming to be a divine messenger—"a teacher sent from God."

2. As these prophecies occur in narratives which bear all the marks of authenticity, and the authors of which were men of tested integrity, we are entitled to presume, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, that they actually fell from the lips of our Lord. When a man of acknowledged uprightness deliberately says that he heard another person utter certain words, the fair presumption is, that they *were* uttered as alleged.

3. If our Lord did not utter these predictions, those who have reported that he uttered them must have been either deceived themselves, or they must have agreed to impose upon others. But is either supposition credible? Is it credible that a number of men should sincerely believe that they all heard their Master make certain very remarkable declarations, such as it was *impossible* for them to hear without being struck with them, when, all the while, this was a mere delusion of their own minds? Shall we, then, say that they agreed to propagate a series of falsehoods in regard to this matter, for the purpose of imposing upon others? If we adopt this hypothesis, we must be prepared to account for certain things which must be true if this be true.

In the *first* place, we must believe that the first preachers of Christianity met and deliberately contrived this falsehood; for, without this, there could not be that *agreement* among them which the hypothesis supposes, and which was absolutely neces-

sary to their having the least chance of being believed. Now, they were either simple-minded men, such as all we know of them leads us to believe they were, or they were deep, designing knaves. But, if they were the former, they *could* not deliberately agree on such an imposture; if they were the latter, they *would* not have committed themselves to the risks of such an experiment. It may be admitted that a man, in the main honest, may be betrayed into a falsehood; but, in such a case, the man is careful to *conceal* his insincerity from even his most intimate friends; and it may be held a thing impossible, on the ordinary laws which regulate human conduct, that any number of honest men will, deliberately, and in concert, agree to propagate a falsehood. We have only to imagine the twelve apostles, supposing them to be such men as we have every reason to think they were, meeting in serious consultation, and gravely looking one another in the face, while they deliberated what lies they would tell the world concerning their Master, to perceive the utter absurdity of this side of the supposition. If, on the other hand, we suppose them, notwithstanding all their seeming simplicity, a company of hardened and unscrupulous deceivers, we have to account for men of such a character committing the enormous blunder of resting their pretensions upon a story which might at any moment have been proved false. For, let it be remembered, that their supposed falsehood was exposed to

detection from *two* quarters; from the Jews in whose hearing it is alleged that many of Christ's prophecies were delivered, and from their own company, any one of whom, wearied with the opposition which everywhere met their cause, or stung by the workings of a burdened conscience, might reveal their collusion, and expose their falsehood. Had either of these very possible cases occurred, their whole scheme would have been exploded, and they would have been covered with shame. While, therefore, on the one hand, we cannot suppose that they would have been unwise enough to encounter such a risk, the fact, on the other hand, that no such exposure ever took place—the fact that no Jew ever stood forward and said, "I was present on the occasion when Jesus is alleged to have uttered these words, and I solemnly declare he never uttered them;" and the fact that none of the first disciples of Christ was ever found, under the constraint of persecution, torture, or remorse, to relieve himself by exposing the falsehoods upon which, on this supposition, he must have known the whole system of Christianity was based, will afford to every candid mind the most satisfactory evidence that there was no dishonest contrivance in the matter, but that the facts must have occurred as the evangelists have attested.

In the *second* place, if we suppose that the prophecies ascribed to our Lord are mere fictions, we must account for men like the apostles and primitive

Christians arriving at the *conception* of such a fiction as they have presented to us in their representations of our Lord as a prophet. I do not refer here so much to the difficulty of their imagining such *events* as they have represented our Lord as predicting, I refer rather to the light in which they present him while uttering these predictions, and to the impossibility of a set of Galilean peasants, such as they were, arriving at any conception so sublime as that of a person from whose lips the most remarkable predictions dropped, as if they formed but the familiar and every-day objects of his far-stretching mind. In this respect, their picture is as original as it is impressive. Had they borrowed from the heathen around them, we should have had their Master issuing his oracles with all the excitement and frenzy of a Pythoness, or affecting the gloom and mystery of a Hierophant; and had they drawn from the example of the ancient prophets of their own nation, we should have had a much more formal and awful presentation than that which they have given. The conception of one who, calm and unexcited, uttered the distinctest predictions of events which no human sagacity could have foreseen, in his ordinary conversations with his disciples, or in his public addresses to the multitude, is a conception all their own. That such men should have possessed such a conception at all, and that they should have been able to unfold it so naturally and so consistently, is to be accounted for,

I apprehend, only on the principle that they drew from the life, and that the sublime reality was before them, as their pencil sketched the picture.

In the *third* place, the hypothesis that these prophecies are the contrivance of the disciples of Christ, assumes that they were concocted *after* the events which they seem to foretell had occurred. For, had they been announced before, they would still have been true predictions, whether uttered by Christ or not, and would have carried with them all the evidence, in favour of those who uttered them, which true predictions yield. But, if the apostles contrived these predictions *after* the destruction of Jerusalem, it must have been for the purpose of attracting the favourable regards of the conquering party toward Christianity and toward its Founder. We can conceive no other object they could have had in view, for such predictions could only be offensive to the Jews, and to all who were on their side, while they could have no effect in confirming those who were already Christians, for to them the artifice would be too transparent to have any such effect: nay, it is more than probable that many would have been disgusted by it; for, however simple the early Christians may be supposed to be, it is incredible that they should have been deceived by so clumsy a trick; and, as there were undoubtedly some honourable minds among them, there was no small risk that the perpetrators of such a contrivance would be indignantly exposed. We

must suppose, then, that the authors of these predictions determined to incur this risk, with all its attendant hazards, in the hope of commending their religion to the Romans. Now, who can read these predictions and believe this? Is it credible that, having such a design in view, they would not have introduced some statements calculated to identify the destroyers of Jerusalem with Titus and his army, instead of leaving this altogether indeterminate? It is remarkable that the topic on which, according to this hypothesis, they should have been most precise, is the very topic on which they represent our Lord as saying not a word. Surely, if they had wished by this expedient to gain favour with the Romans, they would have introduced something which should have seemed to point at that nation in particular, and which would have been flattering to the national pride of that proudest of peoples. For tricksters and forgers, the evangelists have shown themselves, in this instance, strangely scrupulous and unwisely parsimonious, in the use of the materials they employ for the purpose they are supposed to have had in view! A very few words more would have placed the reference of the prediction to the Romans beyond a doubt, and contributed immensely to the success of their project. Why were these words not added if their object was such as this hypothesis represents? Or, if they wished to gratify the Romans, why not at least refrain from expressions that were more likely to in-

flame their resentment? Fancy an apostle going to the army of Titus, or standing up in the streets of Rome, and attempting to excite a favourable impression toward Christianity by proclaiming that Christ had spoken of the sacred standards of Imperial Rome as "the abomination of desolation!" Who does not feel that the very supposition is incredible and absurd?

In the *fourth* place, the supposition that the apostles fabricated these predictions, after the events, is entirely precluded in the case of *one* of them, by the circumstances of the case. I allude to the prediction respecting the flight of the Christians on the approach of the Roman army to Jerusalem. The argument here is capable of being presented in a form which seems quite conclusive. Either it is a fact that the Christians, when the Romans drew near, did make their escape from Jerusalem, or it is a fact that they did not. If they did, they must have had the prophecy among them: if they did not, they can have had no such prophecy among them, for we cannot conceive that they should have possessed it, and yet neglected it. But if they had no such prophecy among them, it is utterly incredible that a writer, whose work appeared immediately after the event, (for if the Gospels were written after the destruction of Jerusalem, it must have been *immediately* after,) should have said that they had. Such a fiction would have been too gross to have been endured, especially as it conveyed an implied cen-

sure on the Christians for not believing their Lord's word. This, taken in connexion with the fact that the Christians actually did flee from Jerusalem on the approach of the Romans, seems to place it beyond doubt, that this prediction at least was known among them as uttered by their Lord, antecedent to the event.

It appears, from these considerations, that the supposition that the apostles invented these predictions, and ascribed them to our Lord, for purposes of deception, is one so burdened with difficulties, that no reflective mind can seriously retain it. It follows, that as they could not be deceived in a matter of this sort, the only tenable opinion is, that their narrative is authentic, and that Jesus Christ actually did deliver the predictions which they have reported.

4. Hitherto I have argued on the presumption that we know nothing of the period in which the Gospels were published; and I have endeavoured to show that even supposing none of them was written till after the destruction of Jerusalem, there is yet historical ground for receiving as authentic the predictions they have ascribed to our Lord. I have now, however, to remark that there is the strongest reason to believe that three at least of the Gospels were written before the destruction of Jerusalem. For this we have the concurrent testimony of Christian antiquity, corroborated by the probabilities of the case, and by internal evidence. At the time of

the overthrow of Jerusalem, Matthew, if alive, must have been at least seventy years of age, perhaps he was considerably older; and there seems no reason to believe that he would defer to that advanced age a task which there was every reason for his discharging as soon as possible. Mark and Luke were probably younger men, but the latter had composed his Gospel before he wrote the Acts of the Apostles, and the latter must have been finished in the year 62 or 63 at the latest, for with this date the book closes. Mark, it is probable, finished his Gospel about the same time. It may be added that all the three write of Jerusalem as still standing, and of the Jewish state as still existing, and that not one of them drops the least hint when recording the predictions of Christ, that these had been fulfilled, which they would hardly have failed to do had they recorded them subsequently to the occurrence of the events to which they relate. In fact, there can be no reasonable doubt that these three Gospels were composed and in circulation several years previous to the destruction of Jerusalem. Now, this it will be seen completely disposes of the insinuation that the prophecies were fabricated after the event. So far from this, they were actually extant in a written form years before the events occurred. It does not, indeed, follow from this that they were uttered by Christ; but this fact proves that the Christians actually had among them these predictions long before the events occurred, and if we admit that they

actually had the prophecy, it is hardly worth while to hesitate as to taking their word respecting the source whence they obtained it. We may therefore regard the historical authenticity of these predictions as lying beyond the reach of serious impeachment or cavil.

III.

Having, by the course pursued, ascertained that our Lord really did deliver the predictions at which I have glanced, it only remains to inquire, What is the bearing of this upon the claims of his religion as divine?

Here the argument is subtantially the same as that from the miracles which he wrought. Prophecy and miracles are, in fact, only different forms of the same phenomenon; for the worker of a miracle does not so much perform the act as simply foretell that God is about to perform it, just as the prophet foretells what God in his providence will bring to pass. In either case the immediate effect of the act is not the proving of the doctrine, but the sanctioning of the teacher. As a miracle is present evidence that God *is* with the man who performs it, so the fulfilment of a real prophecy affords retrospective evidence that God *was* with the man who uttered it. In both cases an unimpeachable proof is furnished that what such a one teaches is from God.

The argument from prophecy, like that from miracles, is brief but conclusive. As God is alone

omniscient, and as only an omniscient being can certainly know what is to happen in the future, all true prophecy, as a prediction of what shall come to pass under circumstances which preclude the possibility of its having been foreseen or conjectured by human sagacity, *must* come directly from God. When, therefore, any man utters a prophecy, justly so called, which in due time is fulfilled, the only way in which we can account for the fact of his having done this is by regarding him as empowered and commissioned by God. But, as God would not lend his sanction to any save one whom he had specially sent forth to speak in his name, wherever such sanction is given, we are bound to receive whatever the prophet says to us, in the name of God, as really and truly what God has sent him to teach.

So far the argument from prophecy is substantially identical with that from miracles. But there is a point in which the former goes somewhat beyond the latter—a point of importance, though it has been very generally overlooked by writers on the evidences. A miracle simply proves that God is giving his sanction to the man who apparently performs it, and thereby entitles that man to demand our submission to his words as the words of God. Prophecy not only does this, but it also *exemplifies* the fact which it is designed to confirm,—namely, that God can convey knowledge to the mind of his creature, so as to enable the latter to communicate it to others.

Prophecy, in short, not only proves the person who utters it to be divinely inspired, but it is itself a divine inspiration. It thus carries us a step further than miracles; and if it does not more certainly prove the presence of God with the teacher, who, on the ground of his supernatural powers, demands our submission, it at least prepares us to receive his lesson, seeing he has already given us a specimen of how God may speak to us through one who is of the same nature with ourselves.

The only objection that has ever been insinuated against the force of this argument, is founded upon the fact that sometimes a prediction uttered at a hazard has, through a curious coincidence, come to pass; from which it is argued that as such a coincidence does not imply divine inspiration, neither can the coincidence between the predictions of Scripture and subsequent events be held to prove that those who uttered these predictions were inspired of God. Now it may be admitted that such fortuitous coincidences do sometimes occur, where no person would be inclined to suppose the presence of divine agency in prompting the apparent prediction; but that these are, for a single moment, to be put upon the same footing with the predictions of our Lord and their fufilment, it seems the height of absurdity to assert. Such coincidences are purely and by universal acknowledgment the result of accident; but will any person venture to ascribe the fulfilment of Christ's predictions to ac-

cident or chance? Let the *number* of these be considered, let their *definiteness of object*, and *fulness of detail* be duly weighed, and then let any person skilled in the calculation of chances try whether there be any conceivable amount that will express the improbability of all these utterances coming true, supposing them mere random utterances of an ardent, or far-seeing, or poetic mind. Persons are, of course, at liberty to reject the prophecies of Christ as evidences of the divinity of his commission, if they can bring themselves to look upon them in no other light than as happy conjectures or lively anticipations which have come true by chance; but if any man can honestly and intelligently bring himself to *this* conclusion, he must possess a mind so utterly different from that of all other men as to render it doubtful how far it can be considered sane.

On calmly and thoughtfully reviewing, therefore, the argument from the predictions uttered by Christ, I would put it to the good sense and candid judgment of all who may read these lines, whether it does not shut us up to the conviction that the religion he taught must be accepted by us as from heaven. We cannot say that he brought no sign of his divine commission with him; for what could more clearly indicate this than his being able to predict what only omniscience could foresee? We cannot say that it is incredible that any man can reveal to us the mind of God; for here is a case in

which we have, in regard to matters in which we and all men can judge, an indubitable example of the conveyance of a portion of the divine knowledge into the mind of a man, for the purpose of being communicated to others; and if it be possible for a man to apprehend what God alone knows in reference to the future history of our world, it is no less possible for him to apprehend the mind of God in regard to moral or religious truth. There is no reason, then, why any man, with such evidence before him, should refuse or hesitate to embrace the doctrines taught by Christ as divine. It is not manly to take refuge in petty cavils, where a great body of evidence cogently persuades to a particular conclusion. It is not wise to refuse to admit what has clearly established its claim to be regarded as true. It is not honest to attempt to discredit by a sneer what we are unable to refute by argument. The only worthy course for a being of intelligence and moral sense is to prefer truth to everything else, and to accept as true whatever can establish its claim to be so regarded by the evidence appropriate to that department of knowledge to which it belongs.

CHAPTER IV.

ARGUMENT FROM THE PUBLIC TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST AS A HERALD OF DIVINE TRUTH.

According to the accounts of the evangelists, our Lord spent the last three years of his life on earth as a public teacher of religion among the Jews. His instructions were delivered in various forms,—to audiences composed of very different classes of the people,—and under a variety of circumstances. Much of his teaching was conveyed in the form of parables, though occasionally his addresses partook of the nature of lengthened discourses; sometimes he communicated truth in brief apophthegms or pointed admonitions; and in some instances, especially when dealing with those who opposed him, he adopted a method resembling the Socratic, silencing opposition by a series of apposite questions, and shutting men up to the truth, by leading them from their own admissions to the conclusion he sought to establish. We find him teaching now in the metropolis, and now in the provincial towns and villages of Judea; at one time addressing the people who were collected in the temple, at another those who had met in a synagogue, at another the promiscuous crowds in the streets, and at another

a select party of friends or inquirers in a private house. Sometimes his audiences assembled in the open fields, or on a mountain's side, or by the margin of the sea. His auditors were as varied as his places of meeting them. Sometimes men of high rank or learning in his nation, sometimes the poor, the illiterate, and the profligate; now persons who had come to cavil or entangle him in his talk, and now humble and earnest disciples who sat at his feet, and heard him gladly. To all these classes of hearers he adapted his addresses with extraordinary skill and knowledge of human nature. With unwearied assiduity, with unequalled patience, with inexhaustible resources, he plied his benevolent but too often thankless task; and only quitted it when he was apprehended by the rulers of his nation, and dragged to a cruel and iniquitous death.

To discuss at large our Lord's character as a teacher, would lead me into details incompatible with my present purpose. Referring my readers, therefore, for a copious consideration of this subject to those books which have been written expressly upon it, I propose at present to confine myself to a brief illustration of the main design of our Lord's teaching—the materials he used in order to reach that design—and the characteristic excellences of his mode of presenting those materials. On the basis thus laid, I shall then endeavour to raise an argument in favour of the divine authority of his teaching as a whole.

I.

To act upon design—to seek a well-defined end by the use of appropriate means, is the mark of wisdom in all departments of human exertion, and in that of a teacher not less than in any other. An instructor who sets to work upon the minds of others, whether juvenile or adult, without having distinctly before him what it is that he intends to effect by his exertions, is very likely to spend his energies to but little purpose. Such a one is not wiser than the agriculturalist who scatters his seeds at random, and knows not whether the produce he anticipates will be of the kind to meet his wants or not.

The consummate prudence and sagacity which mark our Lord's conduct in every other respect, lead us to expect that in that which formed the chief occupation of his matured energies on earth, he would not proceed without a well-considered design and plan. Happily we are not left to our own conjectures or inferences on this point; for both our Lord himself and the narrators of his earthly history have given us specific information regarding the purpose which he contemplated in his public ministry. "I am come," said he, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Matt. ix, 1. "Jesus came," says Mark, "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." Mark i, 14. "He went," says Luke, "through every city and village preach-

ing and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." Luke viii, 1. And when John the Baptist sent to him to inquire whether he were indeed the Christ, he applied to himself a passage in the writings of Isaiah, and announced it as his office to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord—the season of Jehovah's grace—the age of liberty, restoration, and peace.* From such statements we may gather a definite conception of what formed the main design of Jesus Christ as a teacher. He came to announce to men the kingdom of God, to tell them of its advent, to explain to them its nature, and to persuade them to embrace, in a genuine and congenial spirit, its offered immunities and privileges.

By the phrase, "kingdom of God," or "of heaven," our Lord and his apostles denote God's moral sway over his intelligent creatures; not that control by which he holds all creature existence in his hand, and makes all subserve his purposes, but that conscious and cheerful submission to his will, which marks those of his intelligent creatures who reverence and love him.† The idea of such an institu-

* Luke iv, 19. De Wette explains ἐνιαυτὸν δεκτὸν κυρίου, "the grace-year of the Lord, *i. e.*, the year, the era in which the Lord is gracious."—*Kurze Erklärung, in loc.* Kühnoel renders it "annum benevolentiæ Jovæ."—*Comment., in loc.*

† Compare on this phrase Campbell's Fifth Preliminary Dissertation to his translation of the Gospels; Tholuck's Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, translated by Menzies, vol. i, p. 97, ff.; Storr, de notione regni coelestis in N. T., in his Opuscula, vol. i, translated in No. 9 of the Edinburgh Biblical Cabinet; Kühnoel on Matt. iii, 2; Koppe, Excursus i, ad 2 Thess.

tion, as one to be set up in this world of sin and sorrow, we may venture to call one of the most splendid conceptions to which man has ever been invited to turn his thoughts. Conscious of sin, oppressed with pain and grief, wearied and disgusted with the unbroken monotony of evil that prevails in the world, men of elevated minds and warm imaginations have delighted to picture forth schemes of perfect commonwealths, in which evil should be reduced to a minimum, and all that is good and beautiful in man should be developed in ever-advancing forms of excellence. But how feeble and unphilosophical and impracticable are even the loftiest and noblest of these schemes! and how paltry do they appear when placed by the side of the project so simply, so unostentatiously announced to us in the Gospels, under the appellation, "The kingdom of heaven." At the best we have a Platonic Republic, a visionary Utopia, a philosophic Atlantis; the pleasant dreams of pensive and imaginative minds, which no man ever believed capable of being practically realized, and which the sharp utilitarianism of the senate or the market-place only laugh to scorn. These for the best; and as for other schemes which have been promulgated, what are they but the weak or wicked contrivances of men of corrupt hearts, perverted judgments, or distempered intellects? It remains with Christ alone of all human teachers to have been the herald of a scheme of an ameliorated world, in which there is

nothing irrational, nothing fantastic, nothing impracticable—which sets aside no natural law, violates no principle of morals, thwarts no pure or honourable tendency, offends no virtuous or generous emotion—and which, while it dazzles by its grandeur, attracts by its loveliness, and commands confidence by its adaptation to man's felt wants and known modes of thinking and acting. This scheme is the only one that has ever gone to the root of the matter, or contemplated the question at issue in all its extent, and in all its complicated bearings. It sets out from the fundamental principle that the Creator is *entitled* to the homage, the obedience, and the love of all his intelligent creatures. It affirms of each of these that his happiness depends on his retaining a perpetual sense of the Creator's presence, and an abiding determination to live only to his honour and glory. It announces to man that all his misery and all his guilt are to be traced to the fact that he is a rebel against God, and harbours a feeling of enmity or distrust toward him. It proposes to man that this shall terminate, and urges on him reconciliation to his Maker as the first, the essential, the all-comprehending step toward the amelioration of his disordered condition. It unfolds to him a way, provided by God himself, through which that much-needed reconciliation may be obtained, assures him of God's perfect willingness to be at peace with him, and lays before him proofs, which need but to be apprehended to be

felt, of God's unbounded grace, and readiness to bless all who will approach him in that way. In these announcements it lays a basis for the recovered empire of God over his fallen creature man. Wherever they are cordially embraced, they bring the individual under the potent sway of a heavenly influence; his soul is purged of selfishness and impurity; his conscience is relieved from a crushing and a confounding sense of guilt; and the elements of a new life, of a higher spiritual being, are infused into his soul. Each individual recipient of the message being thus made a subject and evidence of its potency, each becomes a pledge of the ultimate success of the scheme. And when that is consummated, the sorrows of earth shall be ended; the wrongs of man shall be redressed; the discords which have grated on the ear of humanity, all through the centuries, shall be hushed; the groans of vexed and wearied creation shall be soothed; the lazar-house of human suffering shall be closed; and, amid the songs of a ransomed and regenerated world, blending with the music of universal nature, and reëchoed by the notes of angels' harps, the voice shall be heard saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." Rev. xi, 15.

Of this great idea the germ may be found in the Old Testament; but it was reserved for Jesus Christ to unfold it in all its fulness, and, at the same time,

to publish the glad tidings of its actual realization among men. To guide men's minds to a just apprehension of the truth on this matter, and to persuade them to such a course as should end in their becoming the blessed subjects of this kingdom, formed the main purpose of his personal ministry. Hence he was led, as a teacher, to take the widest views of man's condition and necessities. He came not as a Jew merely to the Jews; he came as the messenger of God to man as man. He appeared not to uphold the formalities of any system of outward worship, or to indoctrinate men with the dogmata of any existing theological sect; his mission was to men as sinners who were in danger of perishing in their guilt, and whom it was needful above all things to convince of the necessity of seeking peace with God. Hence his call to all men was a call to repentance, to faith, to spirituality of worship, to earnestness about the things of religion, to an entire renunciation of dependence upon external privileges or external performances for acceptance with God. His aim ever was to awaken the spiritual sense in men, to arouse them to deal with the realities of religion, to make them feel that religion has its seat in the soul, and to lead them to the consequent conclusion, that apart from the intelligent reception of spiritual truths and the subjugation of the whole inner life to their control, there is no true or acceptable piety. Appearing at an age when the outward in religion had overborne and almost

suppressed the inward, when the minister of religion was (as has been happily said*) nothing better than a master of ceremonies, and when salvation, so far as that idea was at all realized, was supposed to be secured by making the sum of ritual performance overbalance the amount of personal delinquency; our Lord everywhere proclaimed the futility of all outward worship, except as it formed the index and vehicle of inward feeling, and taught that salvation could be secured only by a change wrought *in* men by spiritual means, and was in no degree promoted by anything done *on* them through sacerdotal incantations, or anything done *by* them in the way of personal merit. For him mere lip-service or knee-homage had no charms. Sternly did he repudiate the service of those who should say, Lord, Lord, and yet did not the things he had commanded. Solemnly did he warn men of the danger of such conduct, assuring them that in the day of judgment many who should claim the favour of the Judge on the ground of outward service, should be rejected by him as persons whom he had never known. Never was the necessity of a real spiritual religion more strikingly enforced than in the teaching of Christ. Intent on bringing men into the kingdom of heaven, all his discourses were made to bear more or less directly on this end. To bring sinners to repentance, to emancipate men

* Vaughan, Essays on History, Philosophy, and Theology, vol. i, page 144.

from the slavery of ignorance and the tyranny of sin, to recover the wandering prodigal to the plenty and tenderness of his Father's house, to reunite the scattered and hostile tribes of men in one great and happy brotherhood, under the rule of the one God and Father of all, and to make earth once more a scene of peace, purity, and joy:—this was the noble and beneficent end which he contemplated, and to which his unwearied efforts as a teacher were directed.

II.

And what were the *materials* which our Lord employed in order to accomplish this end? We may class these under the two heads of reproofs directed to those who were opposing the interests of the kingdom of God, and instructions intended for the benefit of those who were desirous of becoming subjects and servants of that kingdom.

1. In his public addresses our Lord frequently acted the part of a *reprover*. This was rendered necessary by the fearful state into which the Jewish nation had sunk in respect of religion and morality. A process of degeneracy had been going on among them for centuries; and, at the time of our Lord's appearance, had reached its culminating point. Among the mass of the people, ignorance, superstition, and a cold formality had usurped the place of true piety. A kind of religion was retained by them which served to lull the conscience, while it

left the intellect untouched, the heart unpurified, and the life unimproved. The institutes of the religion which had been revealed to their fathers had been overlaid and hidden from the view of the people by a mountain mass of traditionary additions and perversions, the accumulated follies of many generations of men who, seeking to be wiser and fuller than Scripture, only demonstrated their own ignorance and weakness. Among the more educated part of the community, the partisans of rival schools of theology contended with each other, and by their conflicting opinions and their unhesitating anathemas, only the more perplexed and beclouded the understandings of the common people. The Pharisees appeared as the strenuous supporters of traditional orthodoxy, and contended with equal, if not greater zeal, for the dogmas and institutes of the Fathers as for those of Scripture. The Sadducees, on the other hand, professing to keep strictly to the written word, would admit nothing for which precise and express statements of Moses or the prophets could not be adduced. And the Essenes, the third of the great sects into which the doctors of the Jews were divided, were a class of ascetics who attached value to penances and mortifications, and taught that there could be no true religion save in solitude, meditation, and self-inflicted suffering. Of these sects all had some elements of truth, but their views were partial and one-sided; and, as usually happens, they filled up the complement of

their system with pernicious errors. The effect of their influence upon the community at large was most injurious. The contests in which they indulged destroyed the confidence of the people in the certainty of truth, and tempted them to take refuge in a merely formal and traditionary religion. Hence the Pharisees, as the advocates of an authoritative, unreflecting, and ceremonial religion, came to acquire the largest amount of influence in the nation. The people obeyed their teaching with a slavish dependence, and followed in their train with a cringing and superstitious reverence. In the meanwhile, faith, spirituality, godliness everywhere decayed, and nothing but a superstitious formality, a profitless scrupulosity in matters of no moment, a boastful estimate of their own religious position, and a fierce and narrow bigotry that filled them with contempt and hatred of all besides themselves, remained to constitute their religion. And in this degradation of religion, morals also were degraded. With the fear of God was lost or enfeebled the sense of moral obligation. A base sensuality, an unmeasured licentiousness, a disregard of honour, integrity, and equity, reigned through the community. "No form of crime," says their own historian, "was then unpractised among the Jews; and were any man to try to invent a new one, he would find it had already appeared there. In public and in private, all were affected with this moral disorder, and their grand ambition seemed to be to excel each other in acts

of impiety against God and crime against their neighbours."*

Appearing in the midst of such a people, the great Teacher could act no other part than that of a firm and unsparing reprover. Fired with a holy zeal for God, and filled with pity for the misguided and perishing multitude, he could not but lift up his voice against the errors by which they were deluded, and expose the selfish and wicked designs of those who were leading them astray. Hence we find him often speaking out in terms of stern severity in his discourses and conversations as recorded in the Gospels. In the rebukes, however, which he uttered, we never meet with anything that betokens haste or passion. His zeal, though ardent, is ever pure and principled. When he denounces error, it is for the sake of substituting truth in its stead; and when he deals with persons, he ever carefully discriminates the mistaken and the misguided from those who knowingly and for sinister purposes were inculcating error. To the people at large his rebukes partook rather of the nature of warnings and entreaties than of criminations. The errors of the Essenes he exposed rather by his contrary practice than by formal exposures or denunciations—by going to marriage-feasts, accepting the hospitality of those who were disposed to show him kindness, and mingling freely in the society of congenial spirits, rather than by directly pronouncing censures

* Josephus, de Bell. Jud., l. v, c. 13, § 6.

on those whom probably he regarded as in the main honest, though visionary and extravagant. To the Sadducees, also, his manner was usually indicative of respect for their openness and consistency, though he showed no disposition to spare their partial and erroneous opinions; for the most part he rather calmly reasons with them for the purpose of showing them the unsoundness of their peculiar tenets, than pronounces upon them any indignant censure. It was for the Pharisees—proud, selfish, avaricious, and hypocritical, that his keenest rebukes were reserved. With them he maintained an incessant and unsparing conflict. It could hardly be otherwise. We may venture to say, that between such a character as his and that which they as a body displayed, there existed that natural antipathy which rendered collision between them as public teachers unavoidable. In them we see ignorance, pride, insolence, selfishness, rapacity—a restless desire for the applause of men, and an overbearing contempt for all but themselves. In Him we see knowledge, wisdom, meekness, gentleness, generosity, sincerity, perfect disinterestedness, elevated piety, and unbounded benevolence toward all, however humble or poor. That two such antagonist characters should meet without coming into conflict is impossible. Gentle and peaceful as our Saviour was, he could not, without being false to himself and to his mission, have refrained from affixing the brand of his indignant reprobation on characters and conduct such as theirs.

Hence his language to them at times assumes, like that of his forerunner John, the tone of vehement invective. He brands them as hypocrites,—mere whited sepulchres, fair on the outside, but within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness; he charges them with being robbers of the widow and the fatherless, with murdering the prophets, and with deceiving and oppressing the people; he condemns them as perverters of God's word, and as profaners of God's temple; and he holds them up to abhorrence as "serpents for whom was reserved the damnation of hell." Had these expressions fallen from any but the calm, the forgiving, the benevolent Jesus of Nazareth, we might have been ready to impute them to the acerbity of personal feeling; but his whole character forbids such an imputation, and constrains us to regard them as the well-weighed "words of truth and soberness," wrung from him by the sight of the wide-spread and long-enduring mischief which these self-constituted leaders of the people were entailing upon their unhappy followers. It could not be that one so pure, so truthful, so compassionate, should regard with other feelings than those of intense abhorrence their falsehood, hypocrisy, and cruelty, or refrain from giving fit utterance to his feelings. And having come to proclaim the kingdom of God among men, how could he but denounce those as the worst enemies of their species who had shut the door of that kingdom, were claiming to retain the key of it, and

would neither enter themselves nor suffer those who would enter to go in? We may well believe that every reproof he uttered cost his heart a pang; but fidelity demanded that the reproof *should* be uttered, and he would have fallen short of what became him as the herald of the kingdom, he would not have proved himself "the faithful and the true witness" for God, had he abated one word of his heavy but merited denunciations.

2. It was not, however, so much to the rebuking of error and criminality, as to the inculcating of truth that our Lord directed his efforts as a teacher of religion. Here his great aim was to convey to men just views of the nature of the kingdom of God, and to exhort them to those courses of conduct which were becoming in the subjects of that kingdom. It is only a very condensed and cursory view that I can pretend to offer here of his leading doctrines on these points.

(1.) Our Saviour taught repeatedly and emphatically *the spiritual and unworldly character* of this kingdom. He declared that its coming was "not with observation,"—that it was within men—that it was not of this world—and that it was advanced not by the sword or civil power, but solely by the force of truth. Luke xvii, 20; John xviii, 36, 37. He compared it to a grain of mustard seed, which, cast into the earth, takes root, and imperceptibly springs up, until, contrary to what human sagacity would anticipate, it becomes a mighty tree, filling the

earth, and giving shelter in its branches to all the fowls of heaven. He compared it also to leaven hid in three measures of meal, which imperceptibly but surely works until the whole be leavened. Matt. xiii, 31–33. In both these parables the same great truth substantially is taught, namely, that the heavenly kingdom has a tendency to spread in the earth, and that it is destined ultimately to occupy the whole world; but that, unlike an earthly kingdom, it is noiseless in its progress, achieving its victories not in the light, but in the shade—not on the battle-field or in the senate, but in the closet, and binding its laws not merely on the outward activity, but on the hearts, and judgments, and consciences of its subjects.

(2.) Christ taught that *to participate in the privileges of the kingdom of God is the greatest of all blessings for man.* He compared it to a man's discovering a treasure hid in a field, so precious that he sold all that he had that he might purchase that field and possess himself of its hidden wealth. He spoke of it as the getting of a pearl of great price, for which it was worth a man's while to part with all his possessions. Matt. xiii, 44–46. Besides such general intimations, he specifically informed his hearers that the subjects of this kingdom enjoy the favour of God, come not into condemnation, but on the last great day, the day of universal judgment, shall be accepted by the Judge, shall be placed in honour and in safety at his right hand, and shall be

introduced by him to the joys of everlasting life. Matt. xxv, 31, ff.; John v, 24.

(3.) Christ taught that *it is on the ground of his meritorious work that these blessings and privileges are to be enjoyed by men.* "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me. I am the Door; if any man enter by me he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture. I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I am the Vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing." John xiv, 6; x, 9, 11, 14; xv, 5. In these passages (and others of the same kind might easily be adduced) the dependence upon Christ of all who are saved and blessed as subjects of the kingdom of heaven, is most distinctly asserted. At the same time the *ground* of this dependence is not obscurely intimated. It is by the substitution of the shepherd, in the endurance of suffering for the sheep—by the giving of the life of Christ for the life of men, that the salvation and blessedness of the latter are to be secured—a doctrine which our Lord explicitly enunciated when he said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matt. xx, 28. Our Lord taught, then, that salvation is to be found only in him, and that he is a Saviour for us through means of his vicarious and propitiatory death.

(4.) Christ taught that *entrance into the kingdom of God is accompanied and attested by a great spiritual change on the individual who is the subject of it.* Nothing can be more explicit than his declaration to Nicodemus on this head: "Except a man be born again;" or, as he goes on to explain it, "born of water and the Spirit," made the subject of a divine purification—"he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii, 3, 5. Nothing can be more emphatic than his solemn assurance to the Jews, that without repentance or a thorough change of mind, they should all perish. Luke xiii, 3. The same truth appears in the parable of the prodigal son, whose first step toward good was a determination to arise and return to his father. It appears also in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, when the self-righteous and self-sufficient worshipper is represented as sent away from the temple of God unblessed, while the poor conscience-stricken penitent, who only could confess sin and cry for mercy, went down to his house justified and rejoicing. It comes out very strikingly in the parable of the marriage-supper, where one of the guests is found without a wedding-garment, without the costume proper for the place and the occasion, and is accordingly ignominiously dismissed and punished. In the teaching of Christ, nothing is more plain than that the love of sin or indifference to its evil, is utterly incompatible with any participation in the privileges of the kingdom of heaven.

(5.) Christ taught that *admission into the kingdom of heaven is open to all who are willing to enter.* His invitation, as the herald of the kingdom, was to all who were needy to come to him and be blessed. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," was the tenor of his address to the multitudes who surrounded him; and his complaint of the Jews was, that they would not come unto him and live. Matt. xi, 28; John v, 40. To the same effect are the views which he gave of God as a Father who had compassion upon his rebellious and suffering children, and had provided for them a method of recovery of which all are invited freely to avail themselves. So also he taught in his parables. When he likened the kingdom of heaven to a feast which a rich man had made, he describes the servants of the entertainer as sent forth to the streets and lanes, to bring in the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind, and after that as despatched to the highways and hedges to constrain the houseless, the helpless, and the wandering to come in and partake of the rich provision. Luke xiv, 15–23. Having "come to call sinners to repentance," he laid no restriction, no limitation on the call. Having "come to seek and to save the lost," he pledged his word as the ambassador of God, that whosoever, of the lost race of man, would return unto the Father through him, should in no wise be cast out. His was a message of "peace on earth and good

will to men," as well as of "glory to God in the highest."

(6.) Christ taught that *men are responsible for the use they make of the religious privileges thus brought within their reach.* He laid it down as the rule of the kingdom, that "to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and that to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Luke xii, 48. The same great truth is taught in his parable of the wise and foolish virgins, where those who used their privileges well are commended and rewarded for it, while those who acted otherwise are set forth as warning examples of how awful may be the fate even of those who have made the fairest appearance and had the best opportunities of improvement. Matt. xxv, 1–13. In the parable of the talents, also, this is the great lesson taught, and enforced alike by the blessing that came upon those who improved their talents, and the curse that fell upon him who hid his in the earth. Matt. xxv, 14–30. In the ethics of Christ, no point is more clearly brought out than that privilege entails responsibility. He pronounces a deep woe upon those who witnessed his works and heard his teaching, without being moved thereby to repentance. He intimates that for a man to come in contact with the gospel of the kingdom without being attracted by it within the pale of the kingdom, is to incur fresh guilt and a darker doom through misuse of the very means provided for his salvation

and eternal beatitude. And he solemnly warns men against the danger of turning a heedless ear or opposing a hardened heart to the message of salvation he had brought. Matthew xvi, 15, 16; John iii, 36.

(7.) Christ taught that *in the kingdom of God there is scope and demand for the active exertions of all his subjects.* He compared it to a vineyard into which a father sent his sons to work, or to cultivate which the owner hired labourers from the market-place—to a field which the proprietor sent his servants to till and sow—to a net cast into the sea for the purpose of catching fish, (Mark xx, 1; xxi, 28; xiii, 47,) and such like. With this also the main lesson of his parable of the talents accords, for it was according to their labour for the advantage of the master, that the servants who had used their talents rightly were commended and rewarded. Under the same head come such injunctions addressed to his disciples as, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life. Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, &c. Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not," and other such like. John vi, 27; Matt. vi, 20; Luke xii, 33. In his teaching it is made very clear that no one can approve himself a worthy subject of the kingdom of heaven who is not prepared and willing to be active, diligent, and beneficent.

The above is but a hasty sketch of what our Lord taught concerning the kingdom of heaven while he was on earth. It may serve, however, to show how faithfully he kept himself to the great design he had in view, and how closely he made all his instructions and admonitions bear upon it. No truths could be better adapted than these to arouse the dormant, to alarm the careless, to guide the inquiring, to confirm the sincere, and to spiritualize, refine, and elevate the religious conceptions of all.

III.

I proceed now to inquire, What were the peculiar and characteristic excellences of our Lord's method of teaching.

That the teaching of Christ was marked by some excellences of a very peculiar kind, must be evident from the effect which he produced as a teacher on the minds of the people. We read that on one occasion after he had delivered an address in the synagogue of the place where he had been brought up, "the people were astonished and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom?" Matt. xiii, 54. Another evangelist tells us that Jesus having gone into the temple and taught, "the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" John vii, 15. At a still earlier period of his public ministry, we learn that, having ended one of his discourses, "the people were astonished at his sayings." Matt. vii, 28. With the surprise

which his teaching excited, there came to be mingled a feeling of admiration and delight, which led the multitudes to follow him with eagerness and interest. One evangelist tells us that "the common people heard him gladly."* So far had this gone, that the jealous fears of the rulers were alarmed, and they sent men to apprehend him; but these emissaries returned only to confirm the popular judgment, and to give still more striking evidence of the power of his eloquence. "Never man," said they, "spake like this man." John vii, 46.

It must be abundantly evident, that to produce such surprise and awaken such interest, there must have been something quite new, altogether peculiar and *sui generis* in the teaching of Christ. There was no lack of teachers among the Jews; they were only too abundantly supplied with them, being such as they were; so that it could not be the singularity of the occupation which excited the wonder, quickened the curiosity, and interested the feelings of the people. Nor were the Jews indifferent to the merits of their ordinary instructors; they only too highly estimated them, and listened to their addresses with the feelings of men who, whether they learned much from them or not, could never indulge the hope of finding any better or higher. There must have been something, then, in Christ's whole mode of teaching—in the matter or manner, or both, of his instructions, that placed him by himself, and

* Literally, "the mob," or "masses," ὁ πολὺς ὄχλος. Mark xii, 37.

cast into the shade the pretensions of all contemporary rabbis.

What was this something? In answer to this inquiry we cannot do better than accept the statement of one of the evangelists when, in assigning a reason for the astonishment felt by the multitude at Christ's teaching, he says, "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Matt. vii, 29. There was, then, an authority,—a power (*ἐξουσία*) in Christ's teaching, which subjugated the minds of the people to it, and made them esteem him higher than the learned men and accredited religious teachers of their nation.

In the power which marked our Lord's teaching it is manifest there was nothing stern, overbearing, or appalling. He did not try to work on the physical sensibilities of his hearers by loud tones or vehement gestures; nor did he seek to exercise the tyranny of terror over timid or superstitious minds. On the contrary, calmness, gentleness, persuasiveness, were prevailing characteristics of his teaching. Save when constrained to dart the lightning of his rebukes against the Pharisees and their party, he fulfilled the descriptions of ancient prophecy: "His doctrine dropped as the rain and distilled as the dew. It came down as rain on the mown grass, and showers that water the earth. The bruised reed he did not break, nor quench the smoking flax; he did not strive nor cry, neither was his voice heard in the streets." The power which he

wielded was that influence over the springs of human action which the reasoner seeks to attain by argument, which the rhetorician arrives at by declamation, and which the accomplished orator secures by the happy combination and fusion of both.

In Christ's teaching there was the authority of *truth* clearly enunciated and earnestly enforced. In this there is a mighty power. Wherever truth is uttered boldly, forcibly, and with manifest confidence in it on the part of the speaker, it seldom fails to arrest attention, and more or less to impress the hearers. It may arouse their hostility, it may provoke them to opposition, it may even stir them up to madness and fury; but it seldom falls powerless, or leaves the mind as it found it. And, where men are honest, candid, and convincible, it tells upon them mightily, fixing itself in their understandings, swaying their judgments, and erecting an empire for itself in their hearts.

Christ not only forcibly declared and expounded truth, but he spoke with the authority of one who *felt himself infallible.* He had not merely learned truth; he was truth. He could not only recommend truth; he spoke as one who had a right to enforce it. In this respect "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." While the ancient prophets inculcated their messages with a "Thus saith the Lord," Christ did not hesitate to assume to himself the prime place of authority, and introduce his doctrines with, *I* say unto you." Backed and vindi-

cated by his mighty works, and sustained by his teaching concerning himself as one with the Father, such lofty assumptions could not but lend impressiveness and solemnity to his teaching.

But while Christ thus spake with authority, it was not as the scribes. They, too, had their authority. But unlike that of Christ, it was baseless; and it could be sustained, therefore, only by artificial and violent means. Without substantial claims upon the respect of the people, they had to employ arrogance and pretension to cover their real insignificance and unworthiness. Paupers in knowledge, they could not afford to expose their resources to the scrutiny of the world. Pretenders in science, they dared not confide their cause to the simple, straightforward, pellucid defences of honesty and truth.

As contrasted with their teaching, that of Christ was marked by *condescension* and *kindness*. How different was the light in which he and they viewed the objects of their teaching! The language in which *they* spoke of the people ran thus: "This people, who knoweth not the law, is cursed." John vii, 49. The language in which *he* spoke of the people was to this effect: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace." Luke xix, 42. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,

and ye would not." Matt. xxiii, 37. The one embodies the feeling of insolent contempt; the other is the outpouring of the deepest tenderness. The one was doubtless spoken with a sneer; the other, as we know, came forth accompanied by tears. The one is the language of men whose only desire was to keep the masses in ignorance, that they might trample them under foot; the other is the language of one who desired nothing so much as that all mental darkness should be dispelled, that the soul of man might be elevated and refined, and that the race might be rescued from ignorance and all its concomitant evils, and brought to enjoy the glorious liberty of intelligence, and purity, and holiness. With such diversity of feeling in relation to the objects of their teaching, it is not wonderful that while the authority of the scribes was that of overbearing and scornful dogmatism, the authority of Christ was tempered and confirmed by a calm, dignified, illuminative persuasiveness, which at once enlightened and subdued, at once humbled, elevated, and blessed.

Another feature in which the teaching of our Lord surpassed that of the scribes, was the *wisdom and skill with which his lessons were adapted to the different classes of his hearers.* With the scribes there seems to have been but one kind of instruction for all, which the people might appreciate if they could, but which the teacher felt and showed no anxiety to adapt to their capacities or make in-

teresting to their tastes. Our Lord, on the other hand, invariably estimated the intellectual capacity of his audience, and adapted his teaching to that; desiring above all things to be understood, and that his hearers might profit by what they heard. He taught men "as they were able to bear it." When he had a master in Israel for an auditor, he spoke to him as one rabbi might to another, on the abstruser questions of theology, and in the figurative language in which eastern sages are wont to clothe their doctrines. When he had a promiscuous assemblage before him, he spake either in the language of plain and pointed address, or he set forth his lessons in that narrative garb which from time immemorial has been the favourite vehicle of teaching in the East. When he more especially addressed his disciples, he spoke as to persons to whom it was given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God. And when he took little children for his scholars, and taught them as they gathered round his feet, it was in such a way that their young hearts were gained, and they remembered him when he came riding into Jerusalem on the day of his triumph, and made the welkin ring with their shouts of "Hosannah, hosannah, in the highest." The great doctrines which Christ came to teach were ever in substance the same for all; but with consummate skill he fitted the method and the measure of his teaching to the capacities and previous advantages of his hearers. The food which

he dispensed for the minds and hearts of men, was at all times that which was "convenient" for those to whom it was given—milk for babes, strong meat for those of maturer growth. In announcing the gospel of the kingdom he ever so presented it as to adapt its good news to all, however different their circumstances, however varied their capacity.

In fine, our Lord's teaching surpassed that of the scribes in *practical utility and earnestness.* As teachers of morals and religion, the scribes were really little better than solemn triflers. There was no substance, no depth, no reality in what they taught. It is to their doctrine Paul refers when he counsels Titus to "avoid foolish questions and genealogies, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain." Titus iii, 9. The Talmud has preserved enough of their speculations to enable us to form some idea of what sort of teaching they were wont to supply to the people, and more than enough to satisfy us that we have sustained no serious calamity in the loss of the rest. Curious and idle speculations they for the most part are—as, for instance, about the size of Og, King of Bashan, whom they make out to have been so high, that Moses, though himself twenty feet in height, only reached as high as the giant's ancle;—and with these are mixed up ridiculous legends surpassing in wild absurdity all that Western fancy in its most erratic movements has ever contrived;—nice pieces of casuistry about the tithing of "mint, anise, and

cumin;"—and traditionary expositions of the Mosaic institute which had no effect but that of evaporating the spirit and setting aside the precepts of that code. These, and such as these, were the favourite products of rabbinical genius, and may be supposed to have formed the main topics of a scribe's discourse in the days of our Lord. One wonders not that the people had had a surfeit of such food, and had chosen rather to starve and be cursed than have any more of it. It was a dainty repast indeed to press upon men who had souls in them ready to perish for lack of knowledge! No wonder that when the great Teacher appeared "they were very attentive to hear him." His was a different provision for the sustenance of their souls. His was "a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees, well refined." Like a good shepherd, he led these fainting and deserted sheep "to green pastures and by the side of still waters." None who came to him honestly to learn, were sent away untaught. None who came for the kernel of truth were sent away with the empty shell. He never gave any who asked bread of him a stone. He never gave any a scorpion who asked him for a fish. He was ever an honest and an earnest teacher, dealing with real things in the matter of his teaching, and seeking in all that he said "the profit of those that heard him, that they might be saved." What he taught was adapted to the felt wants and longings of the human heart, and had only to be

received to convey light and guidance and purity to the soul.

With so many points of superiority in his teaching over that of the scribes, the people must have been stupid indeed, had they not observed the difference, and hailed him with admiration and delight. No wonder, then, that the fame of his teaching went through all the regions of Judea and Galilee. No wonder that the common people, unfettered by those chains of prejudice which kept back the higher classes, should everywhere have heard him gladly. A new life, in consequence of his teaching and miracles, had come to pervade for a season the decrepid and decaying body of Jewish society. Men felt that once more a teacher sent from God had come to dwell among them. They followed him with eagerness, and listened to him with reverence, for they believed that "God was with him."

IV.

Such was the effect produced—such the belief impressed upon the minds of the Jews in reference to the teaching of Christ. Was this effect legitimate? was this belief just? If it was, then we have only to accept their conclusions and receive the doctrine of Christ as divine; if it was not, the question arises, how we are to account for the existence of such teaching, and for the effect it produced.

Now, it would be vain to deny the *originality* of our Lord's doctrine. In substance and in development it was emphatically his own. There is nothing like it in heathen, nothing like it in Jewish, literature. His teaching has created a new epoch in the history of truth. A new luminary was then fixed in the firmament of thought. His is a glory as a teacher which none can deprive him of—none can share with him.

Equally in vain would it be to deny the unequalled *grandeur* and *vastness* of his doctrine. His great central conception of the kingdom of God—a kingdom based on truth, administered by moral influences, pervaded by love, and holiness, and joy, and open to all men of whatever class or clime—is a conception as magnificent as it is original. And, with this, all the rest of his doctrine is in perfect and beautiful harmony, every line of truth in his system being like a radius starting from and conducting to this central idea, and the whole forming one perfect sphere of divine knowledge.

Once more, it would be idle to deny the perfect *adaptation* of this body of truth to the nature and wants of man. This has now been made matter of world-wide experiment. The words which Christ spake have been carried to men of every nation and character; and men of every nation and character have felt that, as Christ himself said to them, "they are spirit, and they are life." John vi, 63. Of other religious systems it must be admitted that they are

more or less local or national in their character; of this alone can it be said that it is fitted for man as man wherever he is found; like the sunlight, which suits all eyes alike, or the air which men born in every quarter of the globe alike can breathe.

Now, when we connect these facts with the known facts of Christ's early history, we cannot but feel ourselves shut up to the admission that his teaching must have been from heaven. Viewing him simply as the history presents him, he comes before us as a member of a family in very humble circumstances, living in a retired part of Judea, among people proverbial for ignorance and dulness, where he had no means of acquiring much of even such learning as the schools of his nation afforded, and were he was shut out from all acquaintance with the literature, the culture, or the exploits of the civilized nations of antiquity. In these unfavourable circumstances, and labouring at a handicraft trade for his daily bread, he grows up to manhood, when suddenly he bursts upon the world as the teacher of a system of religious and moral truth perfectly original, elevated by it purity, its profundity, and its comprehensiveness above all rivalry, and adapted to the capacity and wants of all peoples and all times; which he unfolds with a skill, a knowledge of human nature, an attractiveness and a power that set all competition at defiance. Such a picture may well provoke the question, "Whence hath this man this wisdom?"

We cannot say that he had it from *books;* for, with the exception of the Old Testament, it may be doubted whether our Lord had read any books; and though the germ of his principal doctrines may be found in the Old Testament, it lies so hidden there that it is only by the reflected light of his teaching that we can clearly discover it. He could not get it *from the teaching of others;* for, as we have already seen, any influence that might have been made to bear upon him from this source would have rather prevented than facilitated the formation of such a doctrine as his. He could not get it from what men call *the spirit of his age*, an influence which often creates great men, who catch up and give fitting utterance to ideas which have been gradually growing up in the minds of the community and pressing for articulate utterance; for never was teacher less at one with the spirit of the age in which he lived than Jesus of Nazareth; never did the prevailing opinions, and prejudices, and expectations of any people receive less countenance from a public teacher than those of his contemporaries received from him. But if not from books, if not from education, if not from the influences of association, if not from the prevailing tendency of his age, there are but two other sources from which he could have derived his doctrine. The one is divine inspiration, the other is the unaided resources of his own genius. To this alternative we are shut up; which side shall we adopt? If we take the latter, it is clogged with

insuperable difficulties. It involves the supposition that a humble Galilean peasant, placed in the most unfavorable circumstances for acquiring large and liberal views of things,—without books, without intercourse with men, surrounded by ignorance and prejudice, and having to labour for his daily bread, was able to excogitate by the mere force of his own intellect a system of doctrine which not only throws all the other efforts of human genius into the shade, but presupposes a universal acquaintance with the wants and susceptibilities of man, a profound knowledge of the deepest problems of the human spirit, and a surpassing power of adapting his doctrines to the catholic condition of the race, so that in all ages and in all times they shall be found equally true and equally serviceable. This, if we think of it, is really a greater miracle—at least a far more incredible thing—than that God should have commissioned and inspired him to speak as he did. In the latter supposition there is nothing impossible, nothing in itself incredible; in the former there is that which the common sense and the common experience of the race would pronounce to be utterly beyond the limits of the possible or credible.

Nor is this all. If we adopt this incredible hypothesis, we must take it hampered with the no less serious *moral* difficulty, that this unsurpassed teacher, this being of unequalled genius, nobleness, gentleness, and goodness, was, after all, *an impostor*. For such he undoubtedly was, if he was

not a teacher sent from God to communicate to men the words of God. We cannot separate this pretension from the rest of his teaching. He himself put it in the foreground. In the most explicit terms, and with the most solemn assurances, he asserted his divine mission; and on the ground of that claimed submission to his doctrines. We can come, then, to no conclusion but that if he was not divinely commissioned, he throughout and deliberately endeavoured to impose upon the people by assuming a dignity which he did not possess. Shall we, then, adopt this revolting conclusion? Shall we say that this wise, this sublime, this otherwise blameless teacher—this man of serene intelligence and elevated virtue—was, after all, a man whose whole public life was a falsehood; who was of a lower grade morally than even the Pharisees, whose selfishness and insincerity he so sternly rebuked; who, with the words of universal charity and sublime purity on his lips, could stoop to the meanness and wickedness of deceiving men in a matter in which their dearest interests were involved? Surely every lesson which experience and philosophy have taught us of the moral nature of man must be reversed or obliterated before anything so monstrous as this can be credited.

But even this is not all. If Jesus Christ was not a divinely-commissioned teacher, we must not only, in the face of all reason, believe him an impostor, but we must believe him an impostor who perpe-

trated his incredible meanness and wickedness *gratuitously*. For what did he gain by it? what could he hope to gain by it? Not fame; not wealth; not power; not any of the things for which alone men consent to sacrifice integrity and make shipwreck of conscience. He must have been an impostor for the mere love of it; and his love of it must have been so intense that it led him to sacrifice for it not only integrity and conscience, but everything that man most eagerly pursues and covets in this world, even life itself! Who can receive an absurdity like this? It would be an insult to any man's understanding to suspect him of believing it.

The infidel hypothesis, then, in respect to the sources of our Lord's teaching conducts us to conclusions which are incredible and absurd. Were it not that it is necessary that this should be distinctly seen, for the purpose of refuting that hypothesis, the conclusions to which it leads are so repulsive, both to intellect and heart, that one would willingly refrain from even the briefest enunciation of them.

From such labyrinths of error and absurdity there is no escape for those who will not accept our Lord's own testimony as to the source of his doctrine. If it was not of God, it and he stand before us as unexplained phenomena — gigantic anomalies that set philosophy and experience alike at defiance. Admit his divine commission, and all becomes intelligible and credible. If it was not the

mere man that spake, but God that spake through the man, no wonder that his doctrine was so transcendent—no wonder that "he spake as never man spake." The marvel in this case would have been had it been otherwise.

CONCLUSION.

In the preceding pages, I have endeavoured to make good the following positions:—

1. That the four Gospels are the genuine and entire productions of the men whose names they bear; and that, consequently, they must have been written within the space of an ordinary life-time, from the date of our Lord's death.

2. That the character which these writers ascribe to our Lord, the events they narrate respecting him, and the discourses which they report as his, must be received by us as historically true; it being morally impossible for the writers to have contrived such an account, or obtained credit for it at the time, if it had been false. And,

3. That if all this be true, the Author of Christianity must be received and reverenced as a divinely commissioned teacher, whose doctrines are a revelation to us from God; it being incredible that any man should be what Christ was, do what he did, and speak as he spake, and yet be a mere impostor,

which is the only alternative if we do not receive him as a messenger from God.

Such is in substance the argument of this volume. In presenting it, I have endeavoured to rest my main conclusions on the great fundamental law of scientific investigation—the Law of Parcimony, which prescribes that causes are not to be multiplied beyond what are sufficient to explain the given phenomena, and that the simplest and most obvious causes which will explain the phenomena are to be preferred.* On this principle all true science rests; and to show that it is departed from in any case, is to show that the conclusion sought to be established in that case is unsound and unphilosophical. That it is grossly departed from by the hypothesis of the infidel, and is obeyed only by the hypothesis of the believer, in reference to the phenomena presented by the existence and contents of the Gospels, it has been my aim to evince.

If I have succeeded in this endeavour, therefore, I have proved infidelity unphilosophical, and shown

* "*The Law of Parcimony* (as the rule ought to be distinctively called) the most important maxim in regulation of philosophical procedure, where it is necessary to resort to an hypothesis, has, though always virtually in force, never perhaps been adequately enounced. It should be thus expressed:—*Neither* MORE, *nor* MORE ONEROUS *causes are to be assumed than are necessary to account for the phenomena.* The rule thus falls naturally into *two* parts; in the one *more*, in the other *more onerous*, causes are prohibited."—*Sir W. Hamilton, Discussions on Philosophy, &c.*, p. 628, second edition, where the law is expounded with that exact and full mastery of the subject which marks the writings of this greatest of living philosophers.

that a belief in the divine mission of Jesus Christ rests upon the same basis on which the whole splendid structure of modern experimental science rests. I have proved also that a mere negative scepticism is in this case impossible; for, as the facts must have a cause by which they may be accounted for, if we refuse the Christian hypothesis, we must embrace that of positive infidelity, incredible and unphilosophical as it is.

Whether I *have* thus been successful in my endeavours or not, I must leave it with the reader to judge. I may be permitted, however, to say that I have anxiously sought to avoid all unfair or dubious means of gaining my end. I have made no appeal to the feelings or prejudices of my readers. I have asked no aid from the resources or appliances of rhetoric. I have made no attempts to damage my opponents or their cause by vituperation, sarcasm, or ridicule. I have tried to be calmly rational, and simply argumentative throughout. May I hope that this will entitle what I have written to the candid and earnest perusal of those whose hypothesis I have laboured to eliminate, and whose position I have endeavoured to subvert?

"*Candid and earnest!*" Yes; for the question is *more* than a question of life and death; there hang on it the issues of ETERNITY.

APPENDIX.

Note A. Page 62.

JUSTIN MARTYR'S QUOTATIONS FROM THE GOSPELS.

That the reader may judge, in some measure, at least, for himself, of the degree in which Justin's alleged quotations from the Gospels depart from the existing text, I shall set down here those quotations which are adduced by Eichhorn, and on which he has based his opinion that the Memoirs of Justin were not any of the extant Gospels.

"In the Memoirs it is written: Except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Dial. cum Tryph.*, p. 333. Comp. Matt. v, 20.

"Do not these things to be seen of men; otherwise ye have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."—*Apol.* ii, p. 63. Comp. Matt. vi, 1.

"Let your good works shine before men, that they seeing them may admire your Father who is in the heavens." "Beware of false prophets which shall come to you outwardly invested in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."—*Dial. c. Tryph.* Comp. Matt. v, 16; vii, 15.

"Take no thought what ye shall eat or what ye shall put on. Are ye not better than the fowls? and God feedeth them. Take no thought, then, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall put on; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye the kingdom of heaven, and all those shall be added to you."—*Apol.* ii, p. 62. Comp. Matt. vi, 25–33.

"Show us a sign; and he answered them, A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and no sign shall

be given unto it but the sign of Jonah."—*Dial.*, p. 334. Com. Matt. xvi, 1, 4.

"Elias truly shall come and shall restore all things. But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done to him whatsoever they listed. And it is written that then his disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."—*Dial.*, p. 269. Comp. Matt. xvii, 11–13.

"There are some who were made eunuchs of men; and there are who were born eunuchs; and there are who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. But all receive not this."—*Apol.* ii, p. 62. Comp. Matt. xix, 12.

"And one coming to him and saying, Good Master, he replied, saying, There is none good but God alone, who made all things."—*Apol.* ii, p. 63. Comp. Matt. xix, 17.

"Some having asked him if it is proper to pay tribute; he answered, Tell me whose image hath the money? and they said, Cæsar's. And he replied again to them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."—*Apol.* ii, p. 64. Comp. Matt. xxii, 17–21.

"Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye pay tithe of mint and rue, but the love of God and judgment ye do not attend to. Whited sepulchres which appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men's bones."—*Dial.*, p. 233. Comp. Matt. xxiii, 23, 27.

"Give to him that asketh, and from him that wishes to borrow turn not away. For if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what new thing do ye, for even the publicans do this. But lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth where moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break through."—*Dial.*, p. 64. Comp. Matt. v, 42; Luke vi, 34; Matt. v, 46; vi, 19.

"Be ye kind and merciful as your Father is kind and merciful, and maketh his sun to rise on sinners, and on just and on evil."—*Apol.* ii, p. 62. Comp. Luke vi, 36; Matt. v, 45.

"A sweat like great drops of blood poured from him as he prayed and said, If it be possible let this cup pass from me."—*Dial.*, p. 331. Comp. Luke xxii, 44; Matt. xxvi, 39.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and

all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself."—*Dial.*, p. 321. Comp. Matt. xxii, 37; Mark x, 27.

"They shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be equal unto the angels, the children of God, being of the resurrection."—*Dial.*, p. 308. Comp. Matt. xxii, 30; Luke xx, 36.

Besides these, Eichhorn gives Justin's account of the birth of Christ, which is made up from the accounts of Matthew and Luke, but cannot be called a *quotation* from them, as it is Justin's own digest of the history, for which he gives no authority. The same may also be said of some of the above-cited passages.

On reviewing these passages it will perhaps surprise many that out of such materials even Eichhorn's ingenuity could extort so much as a plausible argument for his position. May we not apply to such a perverse reasoner the language of the slave in Terence—

> Nihilo plus agas
> Quam si des operam ut cum ratione insanias?[o]

Note B. Page 66.

STRAUSS ON IRENÆUS.

The manner in which Strauss deals with the testimony of Irenæus as a witness for the extant Gospel of John is curious, and, at the same time, somewhat characteristic of this destructive polemic. After admitting that much weight cannot be attached to the silence of Polycarp regarding the claims of that Gospel, he goes on to complain of that of Irenæus, who, he says, "was called upon to defend this Gospel from the attacks of those who denied its composition by John, but who, neither on this occasion, nor once in his diffuse work, has brought forward the weighty authority of his apostolic master (of Polycarp) as to this fact." If I understand this passage aright, Dr. Strauss means to assert that the Gospel according to John was, in the days of Irenæus, assailed by some who maintained that it had not been written by that apostle, and that Irenæus was called to defend it against these assaults. Now, I should like

[o] Eunuch i, 1, 17.

to know what Dr. Strauss means by saying that Irenæus was *called* to defend the genuineness of John's Gospel. By whom or what was he called? I can think of no other call that he had but such as his undertaking to write against all extant heresies imposed upon him. If it is to this Dr. Strauss refers, his words involve an admission fatal to his main position; for it would follow from them, that the denial of the apostolic authorship of John's Gospel was, in the middle of the second century, regarded as a *heresy*—in other words, that the unanimous consent of the Christian Churches had at that time been secured for the fourth Gospel as the production of the Apostle John. How this could have happened, had that production been a forgery, or how in that case the contents of the fourth Gospel can be a collection of myths, I leave it with Dr. Strauss and his followers to explain.

But to what attacks on the genuineness of John's Gospel does Dr. Strauss refer in the above extract? He of course had the work of Irenæus before him in making this assertion; I wish he had given us a reference by which to find the passages on which he founds his statement. I have endeavoured to discover them, but in vain. The only passage I have found at all *appearing* to sanction Dr. Strauss's assertion, is that in which Irenæus charges certain heretics, whom he does not name, as guilty of "repelling at once the prophetic spirit and the gospel,"* because they would not receive the doctrine of the Paraclete as taught in the Gospel according to John. But nobody of sound head would hold this as evidence that these heretics rejected the fourth Gospel as spurious; it plainly means that they refused to submit to the *teaching* of that Gospel. I begin to suspect that these attacks to which Irenæus was called to reply, must be classed among the myths which of late years have been arising very plentifully, and, no doubt, very unconsciously in the minds of that large mass of persons in Germany, who, on the strength of that fragmentary learning with which their *hand-books* and *text-books* are filled, pass for great scholars—especially at a distance.

The best reason that can be given why Irenæus did not adduce the authority of Polycarp in proof of the genuineness of John's Gospel is, that in his day this was not called in ques-

* Adv. Haer., l. iii, c. 11.

tion. Whenever occasion requires, this ancient father attests the apostolic origin of this Gospel in the most distinct terms.

Note C. Page 68.

STRAUSS ON THE TESTIMONY OF HERACLEON AND OTHERS TO JOHN'S GOSPEL.

"Whether or not the fourth Gospel originally bore the name of John, remains uncertain," says Dr. Strauss. "We meet with it [the Gospel or the name?] first among the Valentinians and the Montanists about the middle of the second century." Not *quite* so late; for to say nothing of the almost contemporary testimony of Basilides, the age of Heracleon cannot be placed so far down as A. D. 150; Cave places it in the year 126, and Basnage in the year 125. But let that pass; and let us suppose that the references to John's Gospel by Heracleon are not earlier than the middle of the second century. Well, of what kind are these references? Are they brief and dubious? By no means; Heracleon wrote *elaborate commentaries* on John's Gospel, the design of which was to show the accordance of his views with those of the Apostle John: no trifling evidence, we should say, of the general reception in his day of this Gospel as genuine. "Its apostolic origin was, however, (immediately after,) denied by the so-called Alogi, who ascribed it to Cerinthus." Indeed! pray, most learned doctor, who told you that? On this point Dr. Strauss gives us no information; but as Augustine says what he here affirms, and Epiphanius attests the same, as far as regards the renouncing of John's Gospel by the Alogi, (though they say nothing to justify the "immediately after" by which Dr. Strauss has parenthetically, but unhesitatingly, assigned a place for the Alogi in the second century,) I suppose these are his authorities. They have been long ago examined by Lardner, and found wanting. The very existence of the Alogi is even declared by him to be a fable—what Dr. Strauss would call a myth—"invented upon the occasion of the controversy of Caius, Dionysius, and others, with the Millenarians, in the third century."* But of course Dr. Strauss

* Works, vol. ix, p. 517.

is far too learned a man to know much of what has been said by such a mere sciolist as Lardner! "The earliest quotation," he goes on to say, "expressly stated to be from the Gospel of John is found in Theophilus of Antioch, about the year 172." This is true; but Tatian before him had quoted, without expressly stating it, from John's Gospel;* Ignatius had already alluded to it more than once in passages where Eichhorn says the allusion "is manifest" and cannot be denied;† and the words of Theophilus themselves are such that it is impossible to read them without feeling convinced that in his day the Gospel according to John was held in the profoundest reverence as an inspired book by the Christians. "We are taught," says he, "by the sacred Scriptures, and all the inspired, of whom John says, *In the beginning*," &c.‡ No one can doubt from this, that the Christians of the age of Theophilus regarded John's Gospel as on a par with the sacred and divinely-inspired writings to which they deferred as the supreme rule of their faith and practice. But, says Dr. Strauss, "lastly, there were two Johns, the apostle and the presbyter, living contemporaneously at Ephesus;" and this, he adds, is "a circumstance which has not received sufficient attention in connexion with the most ancient testimonies in favour of the derivation from John—of the Apocalypse, on the one hand, and of the Gospels and Epistles, on the other." What degree of attention Dr. Strauss would wish paid to that somewhat problematical person, John the presbyter, (even in the days of Eusebius there were many who doubted whether any such person had ever existed,) I am unable to conjecture; but when we see his sceptical countrymen thrusting forward this mere *nominis umbra* on every occasion as a rival of the apostle, in respect to the authorship of those books which are ascribed to the latter in the New Testament, I am inclined to think that, considering how little we know concerning him, insufferably too much notice has been paid to him. Such a mode of dealing with evidence in a question like this, appears to me marvellously foolish. I do not doubt the existence of John the presbyter; I admit it, on the testimony of Papias; but—because two men

* See Lardner, vol. ii, p. 139; Eichhorn's Einleitung, b. ii, s. 231. Leipzig, 1835.

† Ibid., s. 233.

‡ Ad Autolycum, cap. 31.

lived at the same time, in the same city, bearing the same name, the one of whom was a person of great distinction, while of the other it is barely known that he existed and held office in a Christian society—are we to be told that the mere fact of the latter's existence is to render doubtful all claims of the former to the authorship of books which bear his name and have been uniformly ascribed to him? Christian antiquity knew but one John, as it knew but one Paul, simply so styled. No doubt there were many Pauls and many Johns among the Christians in the days of the apostles; just as in England there were doubtless many Bacons, and many Newtons, and many Miltons, living at the same time with the great authors of the "Novum Organum," the "Principia," and the "Paradise Lost." But, as with us the man who has immortalized the common name is held to have appropriated it, and to be Bacon, Newton, or Milton, in a sense in which no other Bacon, Newton, or Milton ever can be; so in the Christian Church of the first centuries, each apostle was held to have appropriated the name he bore, in a sense in which it was exclusively his own. When, therefore, any Christian writer attests that *John* did so and so, or wrote such and such books, it is as certain that he means the *Apostle* John, as with us the expression, "Milton wrote such and such a work," would be certainly understood of *the* Milton who wrote "Paradise Lost." Instead, therefore, of desiring to see anything more made of this John the presbyter in the way Dr. Strauss specifies, I should much rather, for the sake of letters, and the reputation of German scholarship, see him remanded to that obscurity from which the restless pedantry of the sceptical school has attempted to drag him.

But, after all, what would Dr. Strauss gain in the case before us, by calling up the shade of the venerable presbyter? Grant that it is possible that he, and not the Apostle John, wrote the fourth Gospel, (which is granting one of the most improbable positions in the whole range of literary history,) it would still appear that this Gospel was produced by a contemporary of the apostle. Dr. Strauss affirms that the two Johns were contemporaries, and if so, let the doubt be ever so great as to which of them wrote the Gospel, there can be no doubt that that Gospel was written by the end of the first or the be-

ginning of the second century. In his eagerness, therefore, to throw discredit upon the claims of the apostle, Dr. Strauss has unwittingly relinquished his own cardinal position—that all the Gospels are productions of the latter part of the second century.

Note D. Page 216.

DEFINITION OF A MIRACLE.

It does not form any part of my plan in this volume to criticise the divergent sentiments of those who have written in defence of Christianity. I have therefore taken no note in the text of the various definitions which have been offered of a miracle by writers on this subject, but have contented myself with pursuing my own line of investigation to what seemed to me a legitimate result. It may be of use, however, to some of my readers, and of interest to all, if I place before them a classified statement of the various meanings in which it has been proposed to understand this term; an attempt which, so far as I am aware, has not yet been made, at least on any extended scale.

The definitions of miracle may be classed under *two* primary heads, according as the miracles of Scripture are held to be—1. Absolute; or, 2. Relative.

I. Absolute Miracles.—(Miracula simpliciter, rigorosa, vera, proprie dicta, &c.) Defined as:—

1. Acts contrary to the course of nature; violations or suspensions of nature's laws.
2. Acts beyond the course of nature.
   a As not capable of being accounted for by any of the known powers of nature.
   b As falling within the sphere of a higher nature.
3. [Including the two former.] Acts contrary to or out of the course of nature.

II. Relative Miracles.—(Miracula quoad nos, miracula secundum quid, apparentia, &c.) Defined as:—

4. Acts resulting from natural laws which are unknown to us. These are construed by us to be divine,
   a Inasmuch as they surpass our comprehension.

b Inasmuch as the occurrence of them is prognosticated or foretold by the party apparently performing them.

5. Acts in themselves simply marvellous, but which we discover to be performed by God from the tenor of the doctrines taught by those who perform them.

6. Acts which were simply inexplicable to the parties who witnessed or have narrated them, but which are not so to us, or may, in the progress of knowledge, cease to be so to our successors.

As illustrative of this scheme, I subjoin some extracts and references under each of the heads.

No. 1.

CHRYSOSTOM :—" A miracle (*θαῦμα*) is a demonstration of the divine dignity." "A miracle indicates mere (litt. naked, *γυμνὴν*) grace from above."—*Homil.* xlii, tom. v, p. 277, quoted by Suicer, *Thes. Eccles.*, p. 1345. Amstel. 1682, fol.

QUENSTEDT :—Miracula *vera* et *proprie dicta* sunt quæ contra vim, rebus naturalibus a Deo inditam, cursumque naturalem, sive per extraordinariam Dei potentiam efficiuntur.—*Theol. Didact. Polem.*, p. 471. Viteb. 1685, fol.

BUDDEUS :—Operationes quibus naturæ leges ad ordinem et conservationem totius hujus universi spectantes re vera suspenduntur.—*Instit. Theol. Dogmat.*, p. 245. Lips. 1723. Similarly Hollaz, Baier, and other of the older Lutheran divines.

HOBBES :—A miracle is a work of God (besides his operation by way of nature ordained in the creation) done for the making manifest to his elect the mission of an extraordinary minister for their salvation.—*Leviathan*, Part iii, 37. Works by Molesworth, vol. iii, p. 432.

FARMER :—That the visible world is governed by stated general rules, commonly called the laws of nature; or that there is an order of causes and effects established in every part of the system of nature, so far as it falls under our observation, is a point which none can controvert. Effects produced by the regular operation of the laws of nature, or that are conformable to its established course, are called *natural*. Effects contrary to this settled constitution and course of things, I esteem miraculous. Were the constant motion of the planets to be suspended, or a dead man to return to life, each of these would

be a miracle; because repugnant to those general rules by which this world is governed at all other times.—*Dissertation on Miracles*, p. 1.

Dwight:—A miracle is a suspension or counteraction of what are called the laws of nature. By the laws of nature I intend those regular courses of divine agency which we discern in the world around us.—*Theology*, *Serm.* 60.

Wardlaw:—Works involving a temporary suspension of the known laws of nature, or a deviation from the established constitution and fixed order of the universe;—or perhaps, more correctly, of that department of the universe which constitutes our system—whose established order and laws we are capable, to the full extent requisite for the purpose, of accurately ascertaining:—works, therefore, which can be effected by no power short of that which gave the universe its being, and its constitution and laws.—*On Miracles*, p. 24.

See also Stackhouse, *History of the Bible*, b. viii, sec. iii, c. 4. Gleig, *Additions to Do.*, vol. iii, p. 241. Marsh, *Course of Lectures*, part vi, sec. xxx, p. 76. Payne, *Lectures on Christian Theology*, vol. ii, p. 364. Hume, *Essay on Miracles*, *sub init.*

No. 2. *a.*

Thomas Aquinas:—Miracula sunt omnia quæ divinitus fiunt præter ordinem communiter servatum in rebus.—*Summa Theol.*, *Lib.* i, *Qu.* 105, *art.* 5, ff.

Luther:—Whatever happens beyond law and order we must hold for a miracle.—*Werke*, Bd. i, s. 1855.

Owen:—By miracles we understand such effects as are really beyond and above the power of natural causes however applied unto operation.—*Pneumatologia; or, A Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit*, p. 114, folio. Lond., 1674.

Burnet:—A miracle is a work that exceeds all the known powers of nature, and that carries in it plain characters of a power superior to any human power.—*Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, p. 62, folio. Lond., 1700.

Wolf:—Supernaturale sive miraculum est cujus ratio sufficiens in essentia et natura entis non continetur.—*Definitiones Philosophicæ collect. a Fr. Chr. Bauermeister*, ed. octava, p. 112. Vitemb., 1752.

Doederlein:—Omnis effectus facultate agentis naturali major, miraculum dicitur.—*Institutio Theol. Christ*, i, p. 19, ed. 4ta. Norinberg, 1787.

Tholuck:—We understand by a miracle an event entirely deviating from the course of nature known to us, and which has a religious origin and a religious design.—*Glaubwürdigkeit d. Evang. Gesch.* s. 421.

Gioberti:—A miracle, being a phenomenon which cannot proceed from the powers and laws which are fixed and ordinary, argues the extraordinary intervention of the first cause, that is God.—*Teorica del Sovranaturale*, § 131.

Woods:—Miracles are events which are produced, or events which take place, in a manner not conformed to the common laws of nature, and which cannot be accounted for according to those laws.—*Art. Miracle in Kitto's Biblical Cyclopædia*, vol. ii, p. 344.

No. 2. *b.*

Augustin.—Quomodo est contra naturam quod est voluntati Dei? quum voluntas tanti utique creatoris conditæ rei cujuslibet natura sit.—*De Civit. Dei*, l. xxi, c. 8.

Brown:—A miracle is as little contrary to any law of nature as any other phenomenon. It is only an extraordinary event, the result of extraordinary circumstances,—an effect that indicates a Power of a higher order than the powers which we are accustomed directly to trace in phenomena more familiar to us, but a Power whose continued and ever-present existence it is atheism only that denies.—*Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect*, p. 525, third edition.

Vaughan:—By a miracle we do not understand even a suspension, much less a violation, of natural laws, but simply such a control of natural causes as bespeaks an intervention of The Cause to which they are all subordinate.—*The Age and Christianity*, p. 82, second edition.

No. 3.

Conybeare:—Miracles are supernatural effects; that is, such as, being above the natural powers of any visible agents, or evidently not produced by them, are contrary to the laws of God's acting upon matter, or at least cannot be accounted for

by any composition or result of those laws.—*Defence of Revealed Religion*, p. 434. Lond., 1732.

Marck:—Miracula [sunt] opera, non tantum quorum ratio et causa a nobis reddi non possit, sed et quæ sunt supra, præter, et contra causas secundas.—*Christ. Theol. Medulla*, p. 134, ed. 6ta. Traj. ad Rhenum, 1742.

No. 4. *a*.

Locke:—A miracle I take to be a sensible operation, which being above the comprehension of the spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him to be divine.—*Discourse on Miracles. Works*, vol. iii, p. 451, folio. Lond., 1728.

Reinhard:—Mutationes a manifestis naturæ legibus abhorrentes, quorum a nobis nulla potest a viribus naturalibus ratio reddi.—*Dogmatik*, s. 232.

Tieftrunk:—It must not be supposed that the cause of a miracle, though it be supersensible, operates without law. Everything must be thought under laws, whether it belongs to sensible or supersensible nature; only we know not the laws of supersensible nature, (the practical law of the reason excepted.) Did we know also the mode of working of the supersensible being, what now appears to us miraculous would seem natural: for we should then be able to refer it to laws, and so to explain it.—*Censur des Chr. Protest. Lehrbegriffs*, Th. i, s. 265. Berlin, 1796.

Lutz:—Proceeding by analogy we may arrive at a view of miracles which does not necessitate our assuming an abrupt interruption and suspension of natural causality and all order, but which suggests to us a higher order in the background. Already has natural history showed to us many such phenomena, where what was formerly the rule has been superseded, and a new rule come to be followed. Such greater and uncommon phenomena are expansions of nature, which is not to be restricted to the narrow stand-point of this earth; in the whole, and in many individual cases, a widening of causality in a higher order of nature cannot be denied.—*Biblische Dogmatik*, s. 221. Pforzheim, 1847.

Trench.—The true miracle is a higher and purer nature coming down out of the world of untroubled harmonies into

this world of ours, which so many discords have jarred and disturbed, and bringing this back again, though it be but for one prophetic moment, into harmony with that higher.—*Notes on the Miracles of our Lord*, p. 15.

No. 4. *b.*

Clericus :—Ut miraculum quidpiam vocetur oportet I. vires humanas superet; II. Praeter constantem naturæ rerum ordinem sit; III. Si quæ, in cujuspiam gratiam, deducenda ex edito miraculo consequentia est, id ab eo cujus potentia, aut in cujus gratiam fit prædici, aut saltem eo tempore, quo eo indiget, evenire. . . . Hic tertius miraculi character vanam esse ostendit eorum objectionem, qui miracula ordini cuipiam naturæ minus noto, necessario tamen sese evolventi, tribuunt; si enim ordo ille naturæ ignotus est humano generi, quâ factum ut Prophetæ, Christusque et Apostoli ejus ordinis effectus ita præviderint, ut post eorum verba, aut preces, semper evenerint.—*Pneumatologia*, sec. iii, c. 8.

This opinion which was first hinted at by Leibnitz, and stands allied to his doctrine of Preëstablished Harmony, has been also adopted by the learned and pious Seiler, (*Vernünft. Glaube an die Wahrheit des Christenthums*, 2 Aufl. Erl. 1813,) and by Bonnet, (*Recherches Philosophiques sur les preuves du Christianisme*, Genev., 1770.)

No. 5. *a.*

Gerhard :—Miracula, si non habuerint doctrinæ veritatem conjunctam, nihil probant.—*Loci Theol.*, tom. 12, p. 107.

Clarke :—The true definition of a miracle in the theological sense of the word is this, that it is a work effected in a manner unusual or different from the common and regular method of Providence, by the interposition either of God himself, or of some intelligent agent superior to man, for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation to the authority of some particular person. And if a miracle so worked be not opposed by some plainly superior Power, nor be brought to attest a doctrine either contradictory in itself, or vicious in its consequences, (a doctrine of which kind no miracles in the world can be sufficient to prove,) then the doctrine so attested must necessarily be looked upon as divine, and the

workers of the miracle entertained as having infallibly a commission from God.—*Evidence of Natural and Revealed Religion*, p. 229, 10th edition.

To the same effect, Hoadly, *Letter to Fleetwood concerning Miracles*, passim; Doddridge, *Course of Lectures*, vol. i, p. 372, ff. 3d edit.; Penrose, *Treatise on the Evidence of the Scripture Miracles*, passim; Le Bas, *Considerations on Miracles*, passim; Chalmers, *Evidences of the Christian Revelation*, vol. i, p. 374, in vol. iii of Collected Works; and several others.

Morus:—Effectiones quas e cognita nobis serie ordinis naturæ explicare non possumus. . . . De doctrinæ veritate prius constare debet, quam de miraculo judicari plene ac tuto possit. —*Theol. Christ. Epitome*, § 21, 23.

Von Ammon:—Debet prius explorari veritas doctrinæ, quam prodigii divinitas.—*Summa Theol. Christ.*, p. 49, edit. 4ta.

Poiret:—Miracula divina sunt extraordinaria quædam rerum ad statum realiorem, perfectiorem, ordinatiorem, vel etiam justiorem elevatio, procedens ab impulsu spiritus sancti, et indivulsa a motibus quibus animæ ad Dei reverentiam, amorem, sanctitatem, virtutes, felicitatem attrahantur: Diabolica sunt extraordinaria quædam confusio, qua res mentesque ad statum corruptiorem, miseriorem, vitiosiorem, a Deo, a perfectione, a felicitate remotiorem deprimuntur; vel si gesticulatione quadam res videantur superficiali modo perfici, sub apparenti illa specie latet verissimum destructionis terminique miserabilis principium.—*Vera Methodus inveniendi verum*, p. 3, § 27.

No. 6.

Spinoza:—Miraculum significat opus cujus causam naturalem exemplo alterius rei solitae explicare non possumus, vel saltem ipse non potest qui miraculum scribit aut narrat.—*Tract. Theologico-politicus*, c. iv, 67.

Wegscheider:—Defendi potest sola miraculorum notio ea . . . qua tanquam eventus cogitantur mirabiles, qui, Deo moderante, ita comparati erant, ut spectatores ad certam providentiæ divinæ efficaciam agnoscendam excitare eosque ad fidem novæ cujusdam religionis doctori habendam invitare possent. Ejusmodi miracula, quamvis aevo rudiori a *super-*

naturali et *immediata* Dei cooperatione repeterentur, quin a simplici tamen naturali rerum ordine, Deo moderante, prodierint, jam dubitare non licet.—*Institutiones Theologicæ*, p. 190, ed. 6ta.

De Wette:—Miracle, rightly considered, is either the foreboding (ahnung) of the divine world-government, or of a superior power of intellect in men.—*Dogmatik d. Luther. Kirche*, s. 51.

Schleiermacher:—Miracles, as appearances in the sphere of nature, but which must be produced in a natural manner, can, of themselves, afford no proof [of revelation.] For, on the one hand, Scripture itself ascribes miracles to such as not only did not belong to Christianity, but must be ranked among its opponents, so that there are no criteria by which to distinguish the true from the false; and, on the other hand, we meet with too much, unconnected with revelation, which we cannot explain naturally, but which we never consider as miraculous, and the explanation of which we postpone till we obtain a more accurate knowledge, both of the fact itself, and of the laws of nature.—*Der Christl. Glaube*, i, s. 116.

If any reader, on surveying this list of conflicting opinions, is ready to exclaim, in the language of Cicero, "Perturbat nos opinionum varietas, hominumque dissensio," let me urge him carefully to peruse the works of Farmer and Wardlaw on Miracles, where he will find the balance held by a master hand, and the result stated with convincing force.

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